THE

FARMER

OF

INGLEWOOD FOREST.

A Novel.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

BY

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LOUISA, OR THE COTTAGE ON THE MOOR, DUNCAN AND PEGGY; ST. CLAIR OF THE ISLES; PENITENT OF GODSTOW, MODERN TIMES; PILGRIM OF THE CROSS, ALBERT OF STRATHNAVERN, &c. &c.

'We do not always find visible happiness in proportion to visible virtue, natural, and almost all political, evils, are incident alike to the bad and good. All that virtue can afford is quietness of conscience, and a steady prospect of a happier state.'

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CHAPTER I.

EDWIN gave a cry of horror—his strength forsook him—the candle dropped from his enervated hand, and he fell senseless on the ground by the side of the coffin. The noise alarmed the house; and Godwin, leaving Mrs. Smith with Fanny, ran towards the apartment, being joined on the stairs by Felix, who had heard the noise, and who was also hastening to learn the cause. Though

astonished on their first entering the room to find a man extended, in all appearance lifeless, on the floor, yet that sensation was speedily banished by humanity, curiosity, and every other idea, giving way to the situation of the intruder.

Edwin was in deep mourning, and had fallen on his face; which circumstance, added to his dress, totally concealed him from the knowledge of his father. Felix, most alert, ran to raise him, and turning him from the position in which he had fallen, at once discovered to Godwin the face of his guilty son. —"Execrable murderer!" exclaimed the old man, withdrawing the hand he had stretched out to assist him, as if it had touched a serpent, "dost thou persecute her even in death?"

By the application of water to his temples, and the care of Felix, Edwin began to recover.—"Cease your attention,"

tion," continued Godwin, gazing on him with a countenance impressed with mingled grief and resentment; " let him die, lest he live to commit more crimes, and swell the account beyond the reach of mercy."

Edwin slowly revived; and though neither fear nor superstition had any share in his character, yet his eyes first fixing on the figure of Felix bending over him (so powerful was the sense of guilt), that, striving to disengage himself, he exclaimed, shuddering with horror — " Merciful God! what art thou?" His eyes at that moment met those of his father, and the emotion occasioned by the person of Felix, as the lesser evil, instantly vanished, and hiding his face on his shoulder, he cried— " Hide me—save me—my father's presence is too much!—all else I can bear."

" Unhappy, guilty wretch!" exclaimed Godwin, " if you shrink thus from my sight, how will you meet that of a

justly-offended God, from whom neither your crimes or murders are hidden? The longest life spent in contrition and penitence can scarcely atone for parricide, perjury, the violation of innocence, and the fell consequences of your depravity, the death of one whose only fault was her misplaced tenderness; and, finally, that of an unhappy babe, doomed even in its mother's womb to fall a victim to your offences! Can such deeds, Edwin, hope for mercy? If they can, delay not, but repent; and with a sincere contrition seek for pardon."

"I dare not hope nor ask it," answered Edwin; "I am forsaken of God, and ere this you must have cursed the day in which I received my being."

"Alas!" replied Godwin, "in an unhappy hour of distraction, I indeed did more—I cursed thyself: but what is my curse—seek to deprecate that of Heaven—guilty that I was, when the mild angel most injured, forgave, and even with

with her last breath entreated pardon for thee!"

"Enough," cried Edwin, "it is complete; my own curse is fallen on my devoted head; repentance and contrition are vain; can they recall the past—reinstate me in innocence and your affection—bring back my mother from the grave, or awaken Agnes and her infant to life?"

"*Her infant!*" replied Godwin; but instantly recollecting himself, and giving into Edwin's mistake, he added—"Thank Heaven, her infant is beyond the reach of its inhuman father!"

"Oh God!" cried Edwin, in an agony of grief, as he gazed on the lifeless forms, "could I have suspected this!—a child!—Oh! Agnes! Agnes! what must have been thy sorrows! This babe, that might have been a pledge of love between us, is but a fresh weight to plunge me yet deeper in perdition! Oh! had she but lived to hear my pe-

 nitence,

nitence, to know my sorrow; or had even the infant been spared, that I might repair to it the wrongs done to its unhappy mother! but it seems as if all the avenues of mercy were closed against me! yes, I feel the hand of Heaven is upon me, and to struggle with my fate is vain. You weep, my father—but what do I say? I have no father, no brother—I am alone—cursed even in existence! Could tears of blood obliterate my offences, yet what would they avail! Oh! that look of innocence," his face falling on the bosom of Agnes, "will sentence me to everlasting perdition!"

The distress of Godwin was too powerful to be expressed in words; he leaned against the foot of the coffin, and appeared ready to sink on the floor from the violence of his emotion.

"You have called me your friend," said

said Felix, addressing Godwin; "at this time permit me to use the influence of one:—Withdraw from this scene; consider the situation of your daughter-in-law, and the anxiety she is now labouring under."

With these words Felix gently took the arm of Godwin, who made no reply, and led him from the sight of Edwin's unavailing sorrow.

Edwin, now left alone, gave way to the most frantic grief; he called aloud on Agnes — execrated himself—wept over her—kissed her cold lips and her right hand; then raising her left, what was his surprise to see on her finger the ring which he had placed there on the fatal night of her undoing! This silent but painful remembrancer redoubled his anguish and distraction; he started, the hand dropped from between his, and striking his forehead with his clenched hands, he rushed out of the apartment,

 exclaiming—

exclaiming—" Hell—hell, thou canst not give extremer torture!"

Felix in the meantime led Godwin to his daughter-in-law's chamber, where he forced him to swallow a glass of wine, then hastened down to the room where he had left Edwin, who was gone, as already related, and in such confusion, that his hat still lay on the floor where it had at first fallen.

Felix had but just communicated this intelligence to Godwin, when a ringing was heard at the gate, and which proved to be William, who was arrived from Inglewood. His sorrow for the loss of Agnes was not inferior to that of his wife and father, and was greatly increased by the scene which he heard had just passed. The news of Agnes's death had reached him two days before, but the distress of Bernard had rendered him incapable of attending them there; the

the particulars of the unhappy event were therefore unknown to him.

Agnes had died on the third day after her delivery, the flattering symptoms so frequent in decays having suddenly disappeared, and given place to the immediate prognostics of approaching dissolution. Calm and resigned, she endeavoured to speak comfort to her weeping sister, and the still more unhappy Godwin; gave the kindest remembrances of duty to her father, and gratitude to Mrs. Palmer and William; and, finally, in the broken snatches of her breath, fervently prayed for her infant and Edwin.

"Oh, Father of Mercy!" cried she, "by the peace thou hast deigned to shed on my soul, I trust I am forgiven! Oh! extend thy goodness to the partner of my crime, awaken him to repentance and virtue; his faults are not beyond

thy power to pardon; error to man is as inherent as mercy and forgiveness are to thee. Bless my babe; may every sorrow I have felt be repaid by a blessing on my child! Make her worthy those friends whom thou hast raised to shield her from the opprobrium that must have otherwise fallen on her helpless innocence! At some distant time may her father love her as I would have done! so shall my spirit, if permitted to look down on earth, be gratified."

Agnes ceased for a few moments, and appeared to struggle for breath; but recovering in some degree, she resumed, addressing Godwin—"Oh! my dear, my honoured parent! for so I will call you for this last time, give not way to sorrow; weep not for me; Fanny will repay my debt of love and duty. Fanny, my beloved companion, sister, friend, what words can I find to address thee, or what blessings equal to my wishes!

The

The strongest I can express is, thy own deeds hang over thee! Assist my worthy brother in comforting my father; tell him I wished to fix my last looks on him." Then turning her expiring eyes towards Godwin, she added, after a painful and convulsive pause—"Bless all my friends! Pardon, my father, pardon the deluded Emma! tell her I remembered her at this awful hour: and, oh! God of Mercy! hear my prayer! forgive my unhappy Edwin!"

This sentence she pronounced with energetic earnestness, her eyes raised with fervent hope, and a sweet smile of placid happiness enlivening her features; then gently bowing her head forward, as she pronounced the last word, expired without a groan, struggle, or any convulsion that might mark the final separation of the active spirit from its earthly tenement.

Though this event had long been expected, yet the shock it occasioned was dreadful. Had not Godwin's grief been diverted by the situation of his daughter-in-law, he had undoubtedly sunk under it; but her sorrow, in some measure, beguiled him of his own. She had been delirious the whole night after her sister's death, calling aloud on Agnes, and struggling to get out of bed to go to her; but exhausted by the exertion, towards morning had fallen into a heavy sleep, during which, Mrs. Smith had persuaded Godwin to have the body of Agnes removed, as the sight at a future period would but increase her grief. Fanny, after a few hours rest, awakened, relieved from the fever, and resigned to her loss, the acuteness of her first sorrow sinking into a serenity that at once bespoke her fortitude and religion.

At first she seemed dissatisfied that Agnes was moved, but her father's reasons

sons were admitted with a sigh of acquiescence, and pressing the babe to her bosom, she exclaimed—"Agnes, if ever I forget thy worth, so far as to love any child more than this thy sacred deposit, may the Almighty shew me my error and ingratitude by depriving me of it!"

In the morning a man had been sent off to Inglewood by the surgeon, as Felix could ill be spared, in the general distress, to convey the news by letter to Mrs. Palmer, entreating her to break it to Mr. Bernard and William, the former of whom had been so violently shocked at the intelligence, that William, however distressed, and anxious to attend his wife and father, could not determine to leave him until he became more calm.

Agnes, in this interim, had been put into the coffin, and the babe of Fanny, conformable to what she had herself expressed,

pressed, placed by her side. This arrangement had likewise another incentive; Fanny wished her infant to be buried at Inglewood, and by this means she was conveyed thither, without the questions which a second coffin would doubtless have occasioned.

On Agnes being placed in her last receptacle, Mrs. Smith had attempted to draw the ring from her finger; but either from the stiffness of death, or its swelling, had found this difficult to effect, and therefore had referred the task o her brother, in which interim Edwin had arrived, and added redoubled anguish to the yet bleeding wounds of the family.

William, on his first arrival, hastened to the chamber of Fanny, whom he found employed in endeavouring to restore his father to some degree of calmness. He looked at her in silent admiration;

ration; traces of the most poignant affliction sat on every feature, yet she evidently endeavoured to suppress her own feelings, fearful of adding to the general unhappiness. Having first embraced his father, he advanced towards her, and throwing his arms about her as she sat up in bed, could only express his sorrow by speechless agony. For some time she joined her tears with his; but soon recovering her emotion, she said—"Is this, William, the way you should teach me fortitude? We both loved Agnes, as our actions to this little one shall prove, but we have also other duties to fulfil—to comfort our parents, by conquering our own grief, and enabling them to bear theirs by shewing them they have children yet left to soften the sorrows of their age.

"Matchless woman!" cried Godwin, "with such a monitor should William ever err, how heavy must be his condemnation!"

demnation!" Then struggling with his emotion, he entered into the particulars of what had passed, expressing his concern at the outrageous grief of Edwin, and his surprise how he could enter the house, and also depart so privately.

This mystery was, however, soon explained by Felix, who informed them that the glass door to the garden had been left open, and that he had doubtless entered and departed that way. His discovering their retreat was also a subject of wonder; but his apparent ignorance respecting the infants, convinced them his intelligence could not give them material uneasiness, as he would not fail to keep secret the share he had in Agnes's death.

" Good Heaven!" cried Godwin, " should the unhappy boy, in this hour of anguish, rush into the presence of his

Creator!

Creator! Alas! I even yet tremble at the remembrance of the horror and despair which distorted his features!"

William made no reply, but soon after leaving his father and Fanny, he, with Felix, walked into the town, and inquired at the various inns for his brother, both by name and describing his person. At the last he called, he was told that such a gentleman had that very evening arrived about seven o'clock, and inquired for a man who had resided there near a week—that both had gone out together, but returned separately; the first returned in a short time, and the other, after some stay, in a state of frenzy; that he had struck his companion, and ordered a chaise and four almost instantly after his return, and, finally, had been gone, accompanied by the man, who was apparently his servant, near two hours.

With this intelligence William hastened to his father, to whom he disclosed it, both being more reconciled, on the reflection that Edwin was not, at such an hour of deserved punishment, left entirely to himself.

William, before he retired for the night, stole alone to the receptacle that contained his sister Agnes, and kissing her cold lips, cheeks, and forehead, bade her a final adieu.

"Merciful God!" exclaimed he, as he gazed on her, "is this all that is left of the beauteous and blooming Agnes, who two years since was hailed the Queen of May, whose lively harmonious note was most distinguished in the song, and whose active step was foremost in the dance! Cruel Edwin, what hast thou done?—grasped at a vain shadow, and cast from thee a treasure never, never to be regained!"

By

By Fanny's desire, the burial was delayed until she should be able to return to Inglewood; the coffin, therefore, on the following day, was closed, the surgeon first taking off the ring, which was now removed without difficulty, the swelling having entirely subsided. A few evenings after arrived the friendly and humane Mrs. Palmer: William now lost no time, but taking an affectionate farewell of his wife and father, delighted to leave them in such hands, he hastened away, in order to administer comfort to the distressed Bernard.

CHAP-

CHAPTER II.

EDWIN, on his rushing out of the house, had, as the man truly told William, returned in a state little short of frenzy, and having no other object on whom to vent his rage, had struck Harris, and cursed him in the bitterest terms, accusing him of twice drawing him into the most horrible dilemmas. Harris, however, had borne all with temper, endeavouring to persuade his master to go to bed, but in vain; he insisted on a chaise being instantly made ready, and setting off immediately for London.—"I will fly," said he, in a paroxysm of rage—"I will fly and forget them all!—a father too! Accursed night, in which I purchased a momentary gratification at the expence of years of pain!—infernal villain

lain that I was, to take advantage of the alarm and emotion my arts had created! But I am justly punished—the pangs of hell cannot equal those I feel. My wife, too (accursed name!) died, as if on purpose to mock my hopes! Another murder! Well—well—well! is not my number yet complete? For what have I now to live?—nothing! My dearest hopes destroyed, and by whom!—fool, knave, idiot, miscreant that I am, by myself!"

The chaise being prepared, he threw himself in, and had advanced three stages towards London by the next morning, when he found himself too ill to proceed, and was unwillingly obliged to give way to Harris's entreaty, and retire to bed. Rest, however, was not to be procured, even by the fatigues he had undergone, the horrors that distracted him redoubling by quiet and inaction: in a few hours his over-

charged brain lost the faculty of distinctly thinking, and was bewildered in frenzy. Harris immediately called in medical assistance, who pronounced him in a high fever, and used the necessary means to relieve him; but all their cares were unavailing: for three weeks his delirium continued with short intervals, the paroxysms being not only dreadful to the sufferer, but also to the beholders; dashing his head against the bed-posts, striking his forehead, gnashing his teeth, and calling perpetually on Agnes, his wife, or mother.—"Take them away," cried he—"drive them back to the grave—they torment me to death—my wife has poisoned me—my mother has shot me through the head—and Agnes," exclaimed he, with redoubled emotion, "has struck a poniard through my heart. Murder—murder—who has committed murder? Not I. I can kill without poison, pistol, or dagger—my love can do the business. Now see—

see—

see—they all laugh at me!—nay, then, I'll laugh too—ha, ha, ha! Oh, oh!—Agnes, Agnes!"

These paroxysms were usually followed by insensibility; nor was his delirium always raving, but frequently partook of the melancholy cast, yet always referred to the same objects.—"Hark!" said he, "they are letting Agnes's coffin down into the grave—they are placing her on my mother—the worms that devour the first will now feast on the last. See—two are already fixed on her ruby lip, and one in the dimple of her downy cheek!—will no one remove them? Call my wife—she can take them off, for she helped to fix them there. Tell her I'll give back all her wealth. What! cannot ye find her? Seek her then in the charnel-house; bid her take all, but save my Agnes."

Such was the unhappy state of Edwin,

win, a victim to his own crimes, and a terrible example that the pangs of conscience can render even this life a hell, though possessed of youth, strength, beauty, understanding, and wealth.

At length he began slowly to recover, but was for above three months unable to leave the inn where he was taken ill. When he gained a little strength, he made short excursions round the country, carefully avoiding all correspondence with his family, whom he could not now bear to think of, as he was convinced that they must regard him as the cause of all their misfortunes, and hate him accordingly.

A month after Agnes's death she was removed to Inglewood for interment; Godwin, Bernard, and William, preceding the hearse on horseback, in deep mourning, and with hearts yet more gloomy than their habits. At a short distance

distance behind was Mrs. Palmer's chaise, containing herself, Fanny, and the little one, attended by Felix on horseback, in which order they reached the Forest in two days, the scattered inhabitants of which, being informed by the distressed Bernard of the time the body would arrive, having collected to receive it at the distance of a mile from home, the elders on horseback, the youths on foot, in their best habiliments, attending the maidens in white gowns and muslin hoods. On meeting the cavalcade the hearse was stopped, and six young farmers drawing out the coffin, proceeded with it to church, two young girls walking before strewing flowers, eight supporting the pall, and the remainder following, with the youths singing a funeral hymn.

The whole family, together with Mrs. Palmer, had so strongly urged Fanny to be taken immediately home, that she

consented, though with difficulty, the lady accompanying her.

The alteration that three months had made in little Reuben, who was now near a year old, his artless caresses, the jealous curiosity with which he appeared to view the young stranger, all conspired to blunt the acuteness of her grief. He viewed the infant's hands, touched its feet, chuckled, and finally held up his chubby face to kiss her. Fanny pressed both to her bosom, wept over them, and her tears having eased her overcharged bosom, by the time the unhappy mourners returned from the funeral, she had calmed her emotion, and received them with composed firmness.

It was happy for Fanny that she had been dissuaded from attending the burial, for Godwin's distress had deeply affected the spectators. The earth had been removed from Mrs. Godwin's coffin

fin in digging the grave of Agnes, who was placed by her side; which sight redoubled his grief to such an excess, that his son could scarcely support him, Bernard wringing his own hands, yet sobbing words of comfort to his brother-in-law.

"Oh, Agnes, Agnes!" cried Godwin, "would I had died for thee!—how much better would my age have become the grave than thy youth and sweetness!"

"Be comforted, my best friend," said Bernard, taking his hand; "it breaks my heart to see you thus lament a child of mine. God gave her, and has taken her back; but he hath left us other children—we are not then as men without hope; therefore be comforted."

All staid until the grave was closed, when Bernard taking the right arm of Godwin, William holding the left, they proceeded homewards, accompanied by

the friendly villagers, who saw them safely enter their own house, and then departed in silence to their respective homes.

For some weeks the family remained absorbed in grief: at length the lenient hand of Time began to reconcile them to their loss, and the living rather than the dead caused their tears to flow.

By Mrs. Palmer's banker in town they had made inquiries concerning Edwin, and learnt his lady's death—but of himself nothing. As to Emma, all respecting her was silent; the family therefore would have thought themselves more happy to weep on their graves, than continually to deplore the errors of their lives.

Godwin's health, in the mean time, appeared by almost imperceptible degrees to recover; but his former muscular

lar strength was gone, and he was reduced into a thin old man.

Felix, whom he had introduced to Bernard, was their favourite companion, and frequently helped them to beguile the long winter evenings, with tales of his former days, the unhappy state of the negro slaves under inhuman masters, and numberless other subjects, all new to Bernard, who, on the relation of any exertion of cruel power, would clench his fist, scarcely refrain an oath, and wish he had the fair breaking of the oppressor's bones.

Reuben at first, on the appearance of Felix, would hide his face in his mother's apron, but soon grew familiar; would run to meet him, climb on his knees, or explore his pocket for an apple, which was usually deposited there.

William, by his activity and gain,

management, took the whole care of the farms on himself, Fanny being equally diligent in her department.

Margery, according to her promise to Mrs. Godwin, was only employed with the children, two strong girls, as the family was large, being taken for the household work.

CHAPTER III.

EDWIN had in some degree recovered his health, as before observed, but his spirits had received a blow not easily overcome; he determined to hasten to London, dispose of his commission, retire abroad, and endeavour, by travelling, to conquer his melancholy; but, before he went, resolved to ride over to the Forest, visit the grave of Agnes, and

and take an everlasting farewell of the spot. One fine morning he accordingly executed his purpose, having been for some days within a few miles; and leaving his horse at a house of entertainment at the village, walked forward to the well-known churchyard. A plain stone, with his mother's name, marked the spot where she was laid, and by its side stood one equally simple, with this inscription—

AGNES BERNARD,

DIED SEPTEMBER 10, 17—,

AGED 19.

His mind, though inured to sorrow, was not proof against this trial; he threw himself on the ground, and wept aloud for a considerable time, until a labourer coming over the stile whistling, disturbed him from his posture, the man,

by his spade and shovel, shewing he was going to make a residence for some new inhabitant.

The fellow, who had only come to the Forest to assist the sexton, who was a man in years, since Edwin's departure, seeing a fine gentleman, pulled off his hat, made a leg, and said—"Mayhap, sir, if you be a stranger, you may wish to see our church?"

Edwin conquered himself sufficiently to reply in the negative, and was about to depart, when the countryman added —"You ha' been reading the grave-stones belike: I used to read them my-self before I was so much among them. Many a time have I spelled over them till I cried again, but now I think little about such matters, or if I do, I sing or whistle to drive it out of my head."

Edwin made no answer; he wished

to

to tear himself away, but could not remove his eyes from the grave of Agnes.

"Ah, master! you be looking at that there new stone," said the man. "If you had but seen the girl it covers, you would have owned you had never met her like. Poor soul, she went mad for love and died. Damn the fellow, say I, that occasioned it! he could never have the heart of a man, for had I been king of England, member of parliament, or even lord mayor of London, I would sooner have took her with a single smock, than any far-fetched princess, though she brought her weight of gold and diamonds."

This simple eulogium struck Edwin to the heart. He could bear no more; so hastily throwing the man a crown, he covered his eyes with his handkerchief, and precipitately departed.

He had not proceeded far when he perceived a woman and two children at some distance, and soon discovered it to be Margery. He would fain have avoided her; yet a thousand fond remembrances rose on his heart, softened as it was by the foregoing scene, and determined him not to shun her.

Anna, now near four months old, was in her arms, while Reuben, holding by her apron, trotted by her side. Margery gave a cry of surprise; her master's children had all been fondled in her arms, and were as dear as though they had been her own. She was shocked at the wan and languid countenance of Edwin, and readily agreed to sit down and converse with him.

"Lovely children," said he, caressing them: "I did not know my brother had a second. Happy William! thou art blessed while I am cursed!—thy virtue indeed

indeed is rewarded, and my vice is punished. This little one, I think," continued he, with a sigh, " has the features of a girl, born, I suppose, in the height of calamity."

" She was born," replied Margery, " three days before Agnes's death—my mistress was frightened into labour by her agonies; but, thank God, the child is strong and hearty."

Edwin gnashed his teeth in anguish, and for some moments was unable to reply. At length he uttered, in a tremulous tone—" Well, well, say no more; I am punished, even sufficiently to gratify the most rancorous hatred."

" And who hates you?" said Margery. " If wishes for your repentance are hatred, then do they indeed hate you, for prayers are never said at night without you and Emma being particularly remembered."

" I thank them," replied Edwin

 haughtily,

haughtily, pride for a moment overcoming every other sensation. "But let us banish this subject. Tell me, Margery, all that relates to my Agnes, and I will sit while I have life to hear; you, I am sure, know every secret, and are acquainted with all my follies."

"Follies!" replied Margery—"that is the London name, I suppose, for wickedness. Little did I think, when I nursed you in these arms, that you would turn out such a bad man."

Sickness and sorrow had depressed the spirits of Edwin; he therefore bore the reproaches of Margery with more temper than he usually possessed; and at length conciliated her so far, that she related to him the whole process of Agnes's illness, her delirium, and constant allusion to the ring, with the repetition of—"*I am Edwin's wife!*"

Edwin's

Edwin's heart was pained with the recital: he wept aloud, but entreated her to continue.

"I have no more to say," answered she: "by what I have heard, you know the rest too well. How you could seduce her I could never devise, for surely a better or a more modest girl was not under the sun. You must have used some of your London potions, I suppose; for I have heard of such things, or surely she never could have been overcome."

Edwin denied the accusation.—"No, Margery," said he, "I am sufficiently guilty without that crime; but relate to me every circumstance—why was my beloved removed from Inglewood?"

"Why, marry, to hide your shame, for I cannot call it hers; she was removed to lie-in privately, and there——"

"Died!" groaned Edwin. "Alas! too well do I know that."

"Her pangs were so heavy, that they frightened

frightened your brother's wife into labour: Agnes died in three days, and the child was buried with her!"

"Enough!—cease!" exclaimed Edwin, "unless you would drive me to distraction. Methinks I see them now; never will the remembrance be effaced from my memory!"

Margery was, as Edwin truly observed, in all the secrets of the family; a faithful service of thirty-seven years had entitled her to confidence, and she was most worthy the trust. Her answers to Edwin were strictly true, yet they disclosed nothing she was bound to conceal.

"And now, Margery," said Edwin, after a pause, "I will bid you farewell, a long farewell; for Heaven only knows whether we may ever meet again."

"What! without seeing any of the family?" replied Margery. "Surely you cannot mean it."

"I would

"I would sooner face death than either Bernard or my father," answered Edwin; "and, for William, even when he was in town, and did not know the extent of my follies, he shook me from him like an adder, whose very touch was venomous—what then should I expect now? No, Margery, they all hate me, and I will leave them for ever. Had Agnes lived, I might have sued for pardon, and they perhaps have bestowed it; as it is, all is now immaterial—my destiny is fixed—I will seek the villain that seduced my sister, and on his accursed head revenge the misery he has for ever entailed on me!"

"God mend us all!" sighed Margery. —"I wish you would not be so passionate, but leave vengeance to God; you may be sure it will overtake him: besides, the scripture says, 'Pluck the beam out of thine own eye, before thou takest the mote from thy neighbour's,'

or

or words to that purpose; but I suppose you have forgot your religion since you turned rich gentleman. Your fine London wife too (God rest her soul!), I hear, is dead; she was surely greatly to blame, for she well knew you was engaged to Agnes. I have seen enough of Londoners to make me dislike them as long as I live; they well repaid your father's kindness; but for them, all had been right—your mother alive—Emma virtuous—Agnes a blessed wife and mother—and you, instead of being an unhappy fine gentleman, a plain, honest, cheerful farmer, like your father, beloved by the whole country, and almost adored by your family."

Edwin was for a few minutes too much affected by the reflection to reply, and wept bitterly; while little Reuben, who had stuck himself between his knees, peeped up in his face with

mournful

mournful sympathy, and taking up his frock, wiped off the falling tears.

"It grows late," said Edwin, "and I must be gone. Tell my father and William that you have seen me, and that if I hear of Emma they shall know it. Say to Bernard, that would my life and all I possess recall the past, I would rejoice at the forfeiture. Say also to Fanny, that if she knew what passes here (laying his hand on his heart), though she must hate me, yet her pity would far surpass her hatred. Farewell," continued he, kissing first Reuben, and then the little girl, who chuckled at the pressure of his lips.—"By Heaven," cried he, "she has the smiling mouth of Agnes, and the beauteous dimple of her cheek. *Oh, may they hereafter tempt no villain to destroy them! or, if they should,*" continued he, after a pause, "*may he, if possible, be still more cursed than I am!*" With these words he rose hastily

hastily from the turf on which he was sitting, and waving his hand as he ran, ere Margery could make reply, was almost out of sight.

What had passed seemed to Margery almost a dream; she however, as speedily as possible, returned home, and related all to the family. Edwin's pallid and altered person she did not fail to describe, together with his apparent contrition and sorrow for the past, his observing the likeness between the infant and Agnes, his vowed vengeance on Whitmore, and his firm conviction that he was too much abhorred by the whole family ever to meet their pardon.

"We hate him not," replied Godwin, "but abhor his crimes; to expiate them is impossible, unless repentance could awaken the dead. Let him, by the most exemplary conduct, endeavour to make his peace with Heaven, which is

far

far more material than the pardon of a weak old man, which, however, shall not be withheld if he returns to virtue; for shall an erring mortal deny to his fellow-sinner what God hath promised to all? But, for my part, I will not scruple to say, that this frenzied sorrow and contrition appear to me rather the effects of his disappointed passion than sincere repentance; penitence is calm and humble, and by the most blameless conduct endeavours to obliterate the errors of the past by the innocence of the future. It is not so with Edwin: did he not say he meant to seek revenge on Whitmore? —and for what? a crime that he has himself more than doubled, for no promise or expectancy of marriage could seduce Emma; she was acquainted with his situation, and voluntarily rushed into ruin; while Edwin's was a premeditated and cruel seduction, rendered doubly atrocious by his repeated perjuries, when even at the moment he was the husband

band of another. Is he then a man to draw the sword of vengeance? Surely no!—his heart must fail him in such a rencontre, and his guilt-struck conscience enervate his arm. Had he indeed said, I will leave those scenes which first seduced my unsuspecting innocence, fly from pride and ambition, seek Emma, and, by my own repentance and conduct, endeavour to influence hers; or, if I fail, retire to some peaceful retreat, and dwell in inoffensive obscurity—then indeed might my heart have cherished hope; but, as it is, I fear this contrition will wear off, and his vitiated mind, like a rank soil, produce fresh thorns to wound us."

"Though I am convinced," replied Bernard, "that your opinion is usually better than mine, yet, in this case, I must differ from you; and I cannot say but he would make a great step towards my forgiveness, if I heard he had fairly killed that villain Whitmore."

"Would

"Would murder then, think you, lessen his crimes?" answered Godwin; "for a duellist is at once a suicide and a murderer; if he falls, does he not rush uncalled into the presence of his God? or, if he conquers—hateful alternative!—has he not sought and spilled the blood of his fellow? There does not live the man, Bernard, no, not even Edwin, who has most injured you, that you would slay: nor, on calm consideration, would you approve the action in another. Reason disclaims it—it is merely the offspring of false honour, which sacrifices the nobler feelings of the soul at the altar of pride and vain-glory—a mask of bravery to cover cowardice, big words, and rash actions, frequently concealing a trembling and dastardly heart. True courage, in my opinion, consists in bearing the common ills which attend human nature with calmness, not suffering our own temper to be ruffled at the folly or knavery of others; to be able to repulse violence

violence or insult with a firm coolness; to defend the weak and oppressed with steadiness; in fine, to seek the life of no man; but, if our own is attacked, to defend it as a sacred trust deposited in our hands by our great Creator, and not to be pusillanimously surrendered. Oh, my friend! can the blood of Whitmore recall the past? Can it wash out the stains of the polluted Emma? Can it restore *us* peace, or *her* innocence? Ah, no! it can do none of these; it can only plunge *his* corrupt soul beyond all repentance, and heap fresh crimes on the head of Edwin."

"With your approbation, my father," said William, "I will write to Edwin, and give him our joint opinion on the subject; a letter will doubtless find him at the house of his late wife."

"The action will become you, my son," replied Godwin, "and acquit you to your own heart, whatever may be its success."

William,

William, in the evening, wrote to his brother, not, it is true, with the same friendly spirit that formerly dictated his letters; but, with manly firmness, and without reproach, conjured him to abstain from every action which might contribute to increase his father's uneasiness; and that, if by any means he should meet with Emma, to endeavour, by lenient measures, to draw her from guilt, and leave vengeance to that Power who had called it his own peculiar province.

CHAP.

CHAPTER IV.

EDWIN had no sooner parted with Margery, but he hastened forward to the little public-house where he had left his horse; and mounting him, set off full speed, in vain endeavouring to banish the uneasy reflections that oppressed him. At night he slept at the distance of thirty miles from the Forest, and next day joined his servant, who waited for him at Ferrybridge. He ordered him to prepare to depart the next morning for London; and, upon the whole, Harris considered him as more calm than before his journey.

On his arrival in town he repaired to his own house, and for the first time sincerely lamented his wife.—" At least, had

she

she lived," said he, "I should have had one friend: unhappy woman, she proved how much she loved me by the sacrifice she made; and I requited her as I did all the rest. Henceforward I must live for myself alone; if life is desirable on such conditions, money must purchase substitutes for happiness, for the reality is for ever vanished from me."

Three days after his arrival he received William's letter.—"They have not quite cast me off," said he; "but how altered! William's letters used to breathe nothing but friendship, this contains only cool advice; and that given, methinks, as if he felt the superiority of his virtue; and is rather dictated to preserve the peace of the family, than out of affection to me. I will therefore simply thank him in his own style, and act as my fate shall direct, for my life is neither valuable to myself nor others."

He then sat down and replied to William's letter, thanking him for his advice, saying, that though he had been heretofore unfortunate enough to cause his father great unhappiness, yet he hoped in future to give no fresh subject; that he meant to relinquish his commission and go abroad; from whence, if his present disposition continued, he should not, in all probability return; concluding the whole by expressing his best wishes for the happiness of the family, and duty to his father.

His next care was to settle his money concerns, dispose of his house, and relinquish his commission. His favourite companion (Mrs. Whitmore) had been gone two months to the Continent, but her place of destination was uncertain, nor had Edwin the most slender wish to be apprised of it, for the hearts of neither had any share in this connexion. On Mrs. Whitmore's part, it was only

to gratify her pride, by having so handsome a fellow in her train; but after in vain expecting his return for six weeks, her patience was exhausted, and she had sought amusement in the gayer scenes of France.

Edwin's attachment was merely licentious, and consequently the sentiments she inspired, on calm reflection, rather caused disgust than pleasure. During his stay in the country he had scarcely thought of her; and even now, on his return, felt no inclination to renew the acquaintance, had she been even on the spot.

All his business settled, he set off for Paris, which he reached in safety, where a new scene of dissipation presented, and sometimes, for a short season, banished the cruel remembrances that destroyed his peace; his fortune procured him admittance into the most fashion-

able parties; and his pride was gratified at the expence of large sums, which he was perpetually losing at play. One evening that he happened to be at the French Comedy, he discovered Mrs. Whitmore in the opposite box, who also soon perceived her recreant lover, and gave him a smile of invitation; but he only replied by slightly bowing, without offering to move from his situation.

"And is it possible," said a sprightly Frenchman, who was present, and spoke English, "that you can be insensible to so charming an invitation? The lady, however, will be soon consoled; she is universally admired as an English beauty with French manners."

Soon after, two gentlemen of distinguished rank entered Mrs. Whitmore's box, and appeared to pay her the most marked attention.—"There now," said the Frenchman, "I told you the lady would soon be revenged on your coldness;

ness; you have missed an opportunity not to be regained; for Dumaresque is at once the most gallant, as well as the most handsome man in Paris."

It has been before observed, that vanity was one of the most predominant passions of Edwin; therefore, though his heart was totally indifferent in regard to Mrs. Whitmore, he resolved to shew the Frenchman his mistake, and immediately repaired to the lady's box. At first she received him with coldness; but after a time, with her usual indulgence. She observed he was much altered, and uncommonly dull—a circumstance he accounted for by informing her of his illness. In short, the meeting, after some little discourse, appeared rather agreeable to both; Edwin's vanity being gratified by shewing the Frenchman that he could easily regain the opportunity he had apparently lost.

At the conclusion of the piece, Edwin waited on the lady home, where she ventured some questions respecting the business that had so completely concealed him since the death of his wife; but he was in no humour to gratify her curiosity, and she soon changed the discourse to more lively subjects. After supper, having drank plentifully of wine, he grew cheerful, and, for the first time since Agnes's death, a smile enlivened his features. Before they separated for the night, they agreed to keep house jointly; for who could presume to scandalize a lady who was under the protection of *her brother!*

Edwin now no longer felt his former compunction; he was rejoiced that he had met with one who could help to divert his chagrin, and sometimes banish painful remembrances from his fancy; his temper, however, had suffered beyond the fascination of Mrs. Whitmore

to

to remove; to his domestics he was harsh and unkind, was frequently inebriated, and gave way to the most outrageous passion on most trifling subjects.

After four months stay at Paris, Mrs. Whitmore expressed a wish to see Brussels; to which Edwin having no objection, they departed, and reached that city, where they entered with avidity into the various amusements; the lady from a natural love of dissipation and pleasure, and her companion as a kind of soporific, to lull the torments of reflection.

Harris being sent before, had hired apartments in a large furnished hotel; and in about a fortnight after the remainder of the house was engaged for an English family that were daily expected, and who accordingly arrived late one evening, after Edwin and his companion had retired to rest.

 The

The following morning, as Edwin was descending the stairs, he was surprised by the sight of Whitmore's valet on the lower story; and the moment after, by Emma herself, who came out of one of the apartments to give orders. He immediately hastened down, opened the door, and the room she had re-entered, and presented himself before her. An exclamation of mingled astonishment and pleasure escaped her, and opening her arms to embrace him, she cried—"Is it possible, my dear brother, that I meet you here?"—But putting her back, he answered—"I have nothing to say to you, infamous girl; with your paramour I have a long account. How is it possible at your age to have so soon forgotten the precepts inculcated from your youth?"

"Ay, how is it possible, indeed, Edwin," answered she, "to forget the lessons of whole years in an instant? To confess the truth, my dear brother (for I cannot

I cannot adopt your coldness or anger), I but followed your lead; your marriage with Mrs. Delmer but paved the way to my flight, as it furnished opportunities too difficult to be resisted: but smooth your ruffled brow, and tell me all the news; your wife we have heard is dead. Are you prepared to do justice to Agnes? Ah, Edwin, that was a bad business! How are all the dear family at Inglewood? for though I have learned to laugh at their prejudices, I have not learned to forget them; yet I fear they have forgotten me."

"Your mother, at least, has forgot you," replied Edwin, "for your conduct has——"

"Oh, God!" interrupted Emma, trembling, "do not speak what I dread to hear! for though I am convinced that I have acted right by following the dictates of reason and nature, unshackled by the ties of priestcraft, yet I cannot bear to think it should be fatal to her."

"The dictates of hell and damnation!" exclaimed Edwin. "The infernal sophistry of Whitmore has plunged your family in misery, and your mother in the grave; and by her side lies——"

"Who?" demanded Emma, with a look of horror.

"Agnes," replied he, with scarcely less emotion.

"Alas! Agnes," repeated Emma, "cruel Edwin! has my conduct caused her death too?"

"No; the cause was the natural depravity of my own heart, aided by the accursed maxims of Whitmore; ambition first beguiled me from home, and the wealth of Mrs. Delmer tempted me to falsify my vows; but unable to live without Agnes, I, in an accursed hour, seduced her! Her death has been the consequence; she is now an angel, and I living, bear the pangs of hell!"

"Oh, my dear mother! my sweet Agnes! and are ye both gone?" cried Emma.

Emma, weeping. "Ah, Edwin! such cruel consequences are enough to force us to lament not following the precepts implanted in our infancy."

"May the villain be accursed," replied Edwin, "who taught us to despise them! but where is he? say, is he in the house?"

"He is not," answered Emma, "if you mean Whitmore. But why, Edwin, will you speak thus of a man to whom you have been so highly obliged. You will not surely raise your hand in anger against the father of the infant I bear, and particularly when you remember he is the brother of a woman who has made your fortune."

"Say marred it rather," replied Edwin; "for can paltry gold recompense me for what I have sacrificed to obtain it—parents—brother—Agnes—all! But tell me, Emma, will you return to Inglewood if the family consent to receive you?"

 "Never,

"Never," replied she, with energy; "I would die for their service, but never more will I behold them. Think you, Edwin, I could meet the eye of my father, or even that of William, prejudiced as they are? How despicable—how sunk must I appear before them! No, Edwin, I have chosen my fate, and will abide by it."

At that moment Whitmore entered. —"Ah! Edwin, well met," said he; "I had just heard you was in Brussels from my servant; you have a fair companion too I find; I hope you behaved well to my sister; for aught else I am your humble servant."

"We are indeed well met," cried Edwin, "for we have a long account to settle on pecuniary subjects, and a yet larger on the score of honour."

"*Honour!*" repeated Whitmore, with an ironical laugh; "you will remember that it is through me you were first entitled to use the word *honour;* but as these

these are subjects on which I never balk any man, nor talk of before women, let us for the present banish the discourse. Come, tell us what is passing in England."

"For your pecuniary favours," replied Edwin, taking a draught on his banker for three hundred pounds from his pocketbook, and throwing it on the table, "this may repay them, for I acknowledge no other; to your sister were the rest due. Would to Heaven I had perished before I accepted of either!"

"I have indeed heard it whispered," said Whitmore, "that you were not altogether so sensible of her condescension as might have been expected, but could never believe it until this confession."

"For goodness sake do not quarrel," cried Emma; "my heart is already almost broken: my mother and Agnes are, Edwin informs me, both dead!"

Whitmore endeavoured to banish her

fears

fears and comfort her, while Edwin, casting a look of rage at both, left the apartment.

About an hour after, Harris, by Edwin's order, found an opportunity to give a note privately to Whitmore, containing an appointment for the next morning, which was immediately accepted.

CHAPTER V.

THE following morning, Whitmore, attended by a gentleman of considerable fortune, with whom he had formed an acquaintance since his residence abroad, met Edwin at some distance from the city, who, on his part, was accompanied by a young officer, whom he had known in England, and accidentally encountered

at

at one of the places of public amusement. The weapons chosen by both were swords, as their skill was pretty equal. The first passes were made without effect on either side, but the second essay was more fatal; for Whitmore received a thrust in the side, and instantly fell.—"The chance is yours, Edwin," said he, with his usual levity, "and in faith I deserve it for substituting the sword for the dung-fork; but why the devil could not you have rested as satisfied with your sister's chastity as I was with my wife's? Confound all new candidates for honour, say I; they take such a d—d deal of trouble to establish their fame, that a man is never safe with them."

A surgeon, who was in waiting at some small distance, was now called, and stopped the effusion of blood, but declared, that he entertained the most alarming doubts respecting the wound; Edwin

Edwin therefore determined to lose no time, but hasten back to France.

On his licentious companion (Mrs. Whitmore) he hardly bestowed a thought, simply giving Harris orders to follow with his baggage, first leaving a letter to be delivered to Emma.

Whitmore was immediately carried home, where his wound was pronounced mortal; and was informed that, in all probability, a few hours would terminate his life. Though this information could not fail of being peculiarly displeasing to a man of Whitmore's character, yet he received it with his accustomed carelessness.—"If," said he to the gentleman who acted as his second, "I had fallen by the hand of a virtuous man whom I had injured, it would have forced me to believe somewhat of retribution; but as it is, this convinces me that chance directs all, for Edwin is certainly

tainly as faulty as myself. To be sure I found him virtuous, but he was as ready to learn as I to teach; and if I seduced his sister, has he not returned the favour with my wife; and by my sister's folly, stepped into an easy fortune? One thing only concerns me; my estate is greatly entangled, and if I die, will immediately be seized by the next heir; nor have I it in my power to make any provision for Emma—a circumstance that gives me great uneasiness, both on account of her situation and future comfort."

"Let not that disturb you," replied his friend, whose name was Hartford: "I give you my word to protect her."

That moment Emma entered, in a state little short of distraction; she wrung her hands in agony, and in the bitterness of her grief cursed her brother Edwin. The letter which he had sent her, and that simply contained his desire

she

she would join him at Paris, with a note of fifty pounds, she tore in pieces. Whitmore, as well as he was able, endeavoured to comfort her, but in vain; her grief knew no bounds, until nature exhausted sunk into a fainting fit, in which she was removed from the apartment, and a few hours brought on an abortion.

Whitmore passed a dreadful night, and on the following morning death was legibly painted on his countenance; but firm to his accustomed tenets, he appeared to treat its approaches with contempt, recommending Emma warmly to the protection of Hartford, saying, with a faint smile—"Though, by Heaven, I would not living have suffered a rival in her love, yet I have no objection to a worthy successor; she is too charming a girl to be buried in obscurity, and cost me some pains to eradicate the follies of country education. Be kind to her,

her, and suffer her grief to weaken itself; it is violent, and therefore cannot last long."

The surgeon entered soon after; his face rather than his words declared his opinion.—" Why, man," said Whitmore, " your features may serve as a kind of thermometer to prognosticate the situation of your patient; to me they appear beyond the freezing point. Pish! hang grief, ever *live* while you can, and banish painful reflection; it has heretofore cost me some trouble to do it, but I at length came off conqueror, and have enjoyed life as much in twenty-seven years as many in sixty."

A violent convulsive pang here put a stop to Whitmore's speech, and he struggled for some time in great agony; from which at length he was, in a small degree, recovered, but appeared much weakened, his spirits more depressed,

and

and likewise seemed shocked at the awful crisis that was approaching.

Towards the close of day, and just before his dissolution, his attendants declared him delirious; for, starting as from a kind of dose, he exclaimed—"The farce is over—the curtain drops—darkness and—doubt! Old Godwin's kindness was ill repaid. I wish I had left Edwin in his native——Emma too—tell her——" A dreadful spasm here for some moments stopped his utterance; at length, faintly struggling, he added—"Her father!—forgiveness! Inglewood!" and with another pang expired..

Thus fell, in the prime of life, the gallant, gay Whitmore, a victim to his own follies, and the vices he had inculcated

Whitmore's

Whitmore's death was a dreadful blow on Emma, as it not only deprived her of the man for whom she had sacrificed every thing, but left her in a situation she could not contemplate without horror; a return to Inglewood appeared the only alternative; for the decorations of luxury he had lavished on her, with some trifle of money, was all she possessed.—"And how," cried she, "can I ever stand in their presence? they will accuse me with the death of my mother, and view me with hatred! The country people too will point at me, and say the fine London madam was obliged to come back to her old home. Oh! I can never, never bear it; I will sooner labour in the most menial manner than submit to it. Would to God I had never left them, or that Edwin had died before this horrid meeting! Join him at Paris!—No, never! The murderer of Whitmore!—I will perish first!"

At

At that moment a person was announced from Mrs. Whitmore, who laid claim to whatever property might be left at Whitmore's decease; and of which she should, as his wife, render the proper account to the next heir. Emma, in this distress, knew not what method to have recourse to; her distress was almost too great to bear; the man she loved dead in the house; herself confined to her bed; in a strange country, and on the point of being deprived of the paltry baubles for which she had bartered both her peace of mind and innocence!—Uncertain what measures to pursue, she was lost in the most distracting reflections, when a note was presented her from Hartford, and contained as follows:—

"MADAM,

"The fear of intruding on your distress has alone withheld me from offering

fering my services to settle your affairs; but as I understand Mrs. Whitmore's conduct has made it necessary, beg you would command me to the utmost.

"I am, MADAM,

"Your humble servant,

"E. HARTFORD."

Emma immediately replied, by requesting Hartford to act for her as he should think most proper, expressing her thanks for his kindness. Hartford, thus empowered, waited on Mrs. Whitmore, and by his rhetoric and well-placed compliments prevailed on the lady to decline her first intention, and the more easily, as he assured her the effects were of little vàlue. The burial of Whitmore he also ordered; had him enclosed in lead, and sent to England, to be laid by his parents and his sister in Leicestershire.

Emma in the mean time had recovered from her indisposition; and her grief, at the end of two months, began to lose its bitterness. To Edwin's letter she wrote an answer, and sent, according to the address he had specified, to Paris.

"Though at the first receipt of your hateful letter I had determined not to answer it, yet, on mature deliberation, I have resolved, for this last time, to address you, though only to say how much I despise you. What had I ever done that you should seek to make me wretched? Or, why was Whitmore's friendship to be repaid by murder? I remember, when we met at Brussels, you said that your errors were owing to his pernicious tenets: how weak must you naturally be to blindly adopt principles that your own heart told you were erroneous! for surely, if *they* occasioned the death of Agnes, the effect must have been

been easily foreseen. Seek not then such paltry subterfuges to palliate your vices—they but add the name of fool to that of villain. Did the example of Whitmore influence you to forsake Agnes, wed his sister clandestinely, and afterwards offer the most sacred promises to your deluded victim?—No, it taught you none of these—the depravity of your own heart alone prompted them; and now, coward like, you would fain cast the opprobrium on another. Think you, woman as I am, that I will have recourse to such despicable evasions?—Never: my follies be on my own head. I imbibed Whitmore's opinions from reason; and though when I fled with him I certainly expected he would procure a divorce from his wife and marry me, yet, when I found that step was impracticable, and must materially injure his fortune, I readily relinquished it, preferring the interest of the man I loved in defiance to the weak censure of a few;

 and

and though you were pleased to say that my conduct occasioned my mother's death, I have no doubt but your own had at least an equal share in it.

"You ask me to return to Inglewood —I answer you definitively, No. The dear inhabitants I love and honour, for they act up to the principles they profess, while you have behaved with constant duplicity, and been a slave to the most unpardonable avarice, not only deceiving your parents, but falsifying your vows both to your wife and Agnes—a girl whom a monarch might have gloried to obtain! Then, to complete all, you have basely shed the blood of a man to whom you owed your advancement; and what is your excuse?—the seduction of *your* sister, while you are revelling in the wealth of *his*, and living in bold adultery with his wife!

"I have nothing more to add, but that, whatever may hereafter be my destiny, my firm resolve is, to avoid you as I would

I would a pestilence; not from fear, but hatred. In my father's or William's presence I might shrink, but in yours, my soul could feel no sentiment but contempt, aversion, and disdain; therefore pursue me no more. I leave Brussels this day, and my utmost wish respecting you is, that my eyes may never more be tortured with your presence; or, if they are, that they had the power not to strike you dead, but to dart never-dying anguish in your heart.

"EMMA GODWIN."

Edwin's rage at the receipt of this letter was beyond all bounds; his sister's reproaches stung him to the heart; and had she been in his power at that moment, he would willingly have sacrificed her to his fury.

He immediately wrote to Brussels, to the master of the hotel; and inclosing a

 gratuity,

gratuity, entreated to be informed whether Emma was in reality gone, or had only deceived him on that subject.

By the most speedy conveyance he received for answer, that she had indeed left her lodgings about a fortnight before, and gone away in the company of Hartford, apparently very melancholy, and in deep mourning; but that he was uncertain as to the place of their destination. Wearied with France, and determined to take no more heed of his sister, Edwin resolved to return to England, inform his friends by letter of what had passed, and, as he still continued unhappy, to devise some new means, if possible, to banish reflection and recover lost peace.

This resolution was directly put in practice; and the family at Inglewood, three weeks after, received the intelligence that the seducer of Emma had fallen,

fallen, but that herself was totally abandoned; for that she had taken another paramour, and withdrawn herself from the knowledge of her brother.

CHAPTER VI.

EDWIN'S letter caused great uneasiness at Inglewood, renewing the wounds that, though far from healed, were at least palliated by time. Godwin by no means approved Edwin's behaviour; he had but increased his own crimes, and plunged Emma into fresh guilt, which would yet more familiarize her with vice, and render prostitution habitual.

"Had he but sent us word when he found her," said Godwin, "inconvenient as such a journey must have been, William should immediately have underta-

ken it, and perhaps, by lenient measures, have prevailed on the poor misguided girl to return, for the seeds of virtue cannot be totally eradicated from her heart, and would perhaps have revived at the sound of forgiveness; but Edwin has rendered all fruitless, and by his violence forced her to have recourse to deeper guilt, rather than trust to a parent's mercy, whose daily prayer is her return to virtue, and a sense of her error."

He then replied to Edwin's letter, totally blaming his whole conduct in the business, and desiring him that, if ever in future chance should throw Emma in his way, he would give them information, without first having recourse to violent measures; lamented that he had added to his former guilt by the death of Whitmore; and finally desiring him to review his conduct and repent.

This

This letter increased the vexation of Edwin.—" I might have been certain," said he, " of meeting their displeasure; it is only for the calm dispassionate William to act with propriety; however, in *this* case I am satisfied with my own behaviour, and am careless of their opinion. Emma may hereafter act as she pleases; I have done with her, and, in all probability, with them all: they have no affection to bestow on me, and I do not want their advice."

Edwin, thus resolved, returned no answer to his father's letter, but sought, as usual, to lose reflection in dissipation; but finding it unavailing, and that both his fortune and health were evidently impaired, in twelve months after his wife's decease he began seriously to repent his giving up the army, as it would at least have served to employ some part of his thoughts, and divert more acute sensations.

These sentiments made him again resolve to seek military promotion; and by dint of application and money well applied, he soon got reinstated in his former rank, but in a regiment which, to his peculiar satisfaction, was ordered abroad. He felt some uneasiness at not informing his family of this new resolve; but certain that this, as well as all his other late conduct, would not meet their approbation, he left the kingdom, without even a single line to inform them of his destination.

In the mean time the family at Inglewood had no cares but what were occasioned by the thoughts of Edwin and Emma. William was regarded as one of the most prosperous and happy young men in the whole county; his land was highly cultivated, his barns well stored, and his house a little paradise; the satisfaction of the old men, the smiles of his wife, and the cheerful antics of the little ones,

ones, repaying all his toils. Reuben was now in his third year, Anna in her second, and a young son called Edward, after Bernard, again filled Fanny's arms, and shared her maternal tenderness.

Mrs. Palmer, who was their constant visitor, and more affectionately attached to them than ever, now proposed to take Anna, who was grown the pet of the whole family, and particularly of Godwin, on whose knee she never failed to climb; while Reuben took the same place on Bernard's. To reconcile Anna to the change of situation, Reuben was for some time to accompany her; and both grew so perfectly familiarized to their new situation, that they appeared to consider it as much their home as the farm. Mrs. Palmer taught Anna to call her mamma; and, indeed, nothing but the name was fictitious, for her care and affection was truly maternal. Anna she had designed for her particular favou-

rite; and Reuben, by a thousand little beguiling words and actions, contrived to share her tenderness. If Anna called mamma, he was sure to say, "and Reuben's mamma too;" or if Mrs. Palmer kissed her adopted child, Reuben was ever ready to hold up his head, present his ruby lips, and claim the same favour.

Mrs. Palmer, whose attachment to the parents increased with her affection to the children, had for some time formed the design of rendering William independent, though she could not exactly fix on the means, until one day happening to be at Godwin's, when he received a letter to inform him of the death of the person who had hitherto managed his money business, and in whose hands his savings had been constantly deposited, the heir-at-law requesting to be informed of his pleasure; adding, that he was ready to pay up the sums in his hands at a week's notice. Godwin expressed

ed his sorrow at this intelligence, and immediately had recourse to Mrs. Palmer, to advise on the best means of disposing of the sum he possessed, which, though but a few hundreds, was to him too considerable to be neglected.

"Suppose," replied the lady, "you made a purchase, should you meet a good offer; I think that an eligible method of disposing of money."

"I am of the same opinion," said Godwin; "and the only objection is, that it would be extending our cares with our property: the money was originally, or at least the greater part, laid by for a little fortune for our unhappy Emma: she, alas! I fear will never claim it, or still would I regard four hundred pounds as hers, not as a marriage portion, but to place her with frugality above want. I have, however, other duties," continued the old man, wiping off a starting tear, and looking fondly on his grandchildren; "I would

" I would therefore willingly place our little all in safe hands, or, as you say, madam, make a purchase for their future benefit."

" Well then, what say you to buying the whole of the land you rent of me, which, with what you already possess, will be a respectable property?"

" Madam!" replied Godwin, astonished at the proposal, " we have not half the sum your land is worth, the purchase of which was the farthest from my thoughts; for so kind are you, that the most distant idea of a change never entered my mind."

" It is, however," answered she, " as you have asked my advice, the most prudent plan; besides, now I think of it, I may have an occasion for six or seven hundred pounds, and would sooner let you have a bargain than another."

" Pardon me, madam," replied the old man: " if your generosity forces you to be extravagant, it must not make us,

the

the most obliged of your dependants, improperly impose on that goodness. Extensive as are your charities, I have heard you aver that you always lived within your income; and can but regard your offer as an effusion of the friendship with which you have honoured us. Condescend, madam, to place our money with some you may doubtless have out at common interest—it is the utmost I aspire to. Hereafter, if ever it should be in William's power, for he is uncommonly prosperous, to make an honest purchase, I have no doubt, to possess the land which gave his father bread, would be the height of his ambition; at present it is as far beyond our abilities as our wishes: a dependence on you, I am convinced, we shall never find painful."

"I have ever thought," replied Mrs. Palmer, with a smile, "that you was much unacquainted with the ways of the world. Pray, what business have you

to

to value my land ?—to state the price is my business, and yours to get it as cheap as you can."

"Not at the expence of your generosity and my own probity," answered Godwin.

"To make your son William independent, has for some time been my intention," replied she; "but I could not conveniently before devise the means: I have now discovered them, and shall feel myself offended if not suffered to gratify my inclinations at the expence of what is to me a trifle."

Godwin was unable to reply; sentiments too great for utterance swelled his bosom, and prevented speech; while Fanny, who was alone present at the discourse, remained also silent, overcome at once with gratitude and pleasure. William and Bernard at that moment entered, and Mrs. Palmer, in a lively manner, immediately referred the dispute

pute to them. A crimson flush for a moment overspread William's face; but having expressed his thanks, he begged leave to decline what he must ever consider, should he accept it, as an imposition on her generosity.

"Simply then," replied the lady, "you refuse what would give me the highest satisfaction, as I should consider myself instrumental to your welfare, and take delight in it accordingly. If you outlive me, you may chance to have the land at a cheaper rate, but then, remember I shall not have the pleasure of contemplating my own work."

This last observation was too much for all; but Fanny, whose affection was far superior to her respect to Mrs. Palmer, threw her arms around her neck, and wept on her bosom.—"Never, never may I live to see that day," said she; "again should I lose a sister, and again would my Anna become an orphan."

"Not

"Not so," replied Mrs. Palmer, looking affectionately round her—"Anna can never be an orphan while any of these survive; but, however, for a moment attend to me then; if you decline my offer, I have done, and withdraw it. My ideas on some subjects are singular, and I perhaps have ideas of gratification peculiar to myself. What I die possessed of will doubtless be disposed of to my friends, or for purposes which I may think for the best; but, believe me, I had rather bestow living what cannot injure my fortune, and see the effect of my gifts, than have afterwards statues erected to my memory, when I am insensible what fruits they have produced. Let me then contemplate your rising prosperity—let me have the satisfaction to think I contributed towards it; nothing but either a false idea of probity or pride can make you decline it. I have no relations who want it, no claims but what my fortune can tenfold repay; and

and to reconcile you to the business, I offer to take the whole of the money you possess, yet would far more willingly make it a gift. What then have you to object? If you accept my offer, I shall be obliged and gratified; if you do not, I shall look upon you as a proud family, who despise even the assistance of a friend."

"God forbid that," said Bernard. "Not one here but what loves you dearly, but at the same time are fearful of imposing upon your good-nature and kindness. I am an old man, madam, and simple; but, with your good liking, if you accept the ready money, to which I can add about three hundred pounds, I think William, by continuing his usual payments, in a few years might be able to discharge the whole."

"I will accept only of seven hundred," returned Mrs. Palmer: "if the estate is worth more, to you I will leave it in trust, to pay the overplus to Reuben

ben and Anna, whom I regard as my peculiar charge, the first from the recollection of my own beloved boy, the last from both promise and affection. Nay, no reply; be it as I have said, or I must regard my friendship as spurned, and act accordingly. The deeds shall be immediately ready, and I expect your concurrence without further hesitation, as you value my good opinion."

"May we never forfeit it, madam!" replied Godwin. "Be all as you have said: Heaven make us worthy your goodness!"

This concluded the business that placed the farmer above dependence, and gratified the generous mind of Mrs. Palmer.

The writings of the estate were regularly assigned to William in a few days, and seven hundred pounds paid down, which Mrs. Palmer declared to be her

full

full demand; while William, on the other hand, protested he could only regard that sum as one-third of the purchase.

From this time Godwin's consequence increased in the country; for though he did not proclaim what had passed, yet Mrs. Palmer made no scruple to declare she had sold the estate, and who was the purchaser. The title Esquire now began to be tacked to the name of Godwin; but this was so peremptorily refused, that it was speedily dropped.

" The appellation of Esquire," said William one day to a farmer who thus addressed him, " by no means belongs to me. I am, like yourself, a plain farmer, and superior success entitles me to no such distinction. Had I lived, indeed, in the days of chivalry, I might perhaps have imbibed the folly of the times, in thinking the name glorious,

and

and have possibly thrown away my life in the service of some silly knight, who chose to affirm his paramour a miracle of chastity, or constellation of beauty; but these Quixotisms are past, simple reason prevails, and knights are no longer so valorous, nor esquires put to so hard a service. The name now in general implies either a foxhunter, or a man who can exist without labour. I am not the first of these, nor can I live without industry. I am therefore plain William Godwin, or farmer Godwin, no 'squire, but, I trust, an honest man, and as such at your service."

Notwithstanding these contracted ideas, William was universally esteemed; not a respectable man in the whole country passed him unnoticed, nor a poor one without a blessing.

In the midst of happiness, anxious for Edwin and Emma, he had by every possible

sible means inquired after them, but in vain; and was at length obliged to struggle to forget them in the harmony of his domestic circle.

CHAPTER VII.

Thus passed days, months, and years, honour increasing with age in the one part of the family, and reason, affection, strength, and beauty, with the other, until Reuben had attained his fourteenth, and Anna her thirteenth year—a period that had given William two more children, Edward and a blooming girl, called Agnes, all happy as they were innocent; their hearts as free from guile as sorrow.

The education of the boys was now the amusement of Godwin, who, surrounded

rounded by his grandchildren, forgot the seventy winters that had passed over him. The remembrance of the ungrateful Edwin and Emma alone cast a cloud over the otherwise serene evening of his days, though he now had not any doubt but that both were dead, as no tidings had transpired for so long a time.

Edward was somewhat more than two years younger than Reuben—Agnes in the same proportion from himself, of similar tempers, open, cheerful, and humane, and tenderly attached to each other; but if there was any particular partiality, it was evidently between Reuben and Anna, who, although they did not live together (Reuben residing at his father's) could not pass a day asunder. Anna, educated from her most tender infancy by Mrs. Palmer, knew no difference between the affection she felt for her and her reputed mother; she looked up to both with duty and tenderness, and

and would frequently, in the overflowings of her little heart, exclaim—"What a happy girl am I to have two mothers!" an expression that never failed to force a tear from Fanny, and cast a momentary gloom over the party.

Bernard was still strong and hearty, and apparently as happy as his grandchildren; he sung with them, played with them, and was ever foremost in devising sports for their amusement. Godwin and William were his oracles—Fanny his paragon; but the children, yet more than all, were his pride, his delight, and his companions

"From morn to noon, from noon to dewy eve."

About the period before-mentioned, Mrs. Palmer's steward dying, and having no one she could immediately appoint, with the assistance of Godwin and Felix, she for some time transacted her own business; during the course of which

which a lease of considerable value expiring, she entreated William to take a journey to London, and renew it to the former holder on terms she specified.

William accordingly departed, taking Reuben, who was now almost as good a horseman as himself, for a companion; and after a pleasant and easy journey, reached the metropolis.

The business that brought him to town was his first care, and which completed, he would willingly have hastened immediately back, but Reuben's curiosity had a number of incentives, which his father chose rather to gratify than, by opposition and uncertainty, leave him to suppose they were more pleasing or desirable than they really were.

They visited the Tower, St. Paul's, the Abbey, and lastly the Theatre, where, happening to be late, and on an evening

evening when the house was uncommonly crowded, William, sooner than disappoint his son, went into the boxes. Until near the end of the fourth act their attention had been totally drawn towards the scene; but William then casting his eyes around, discovered, in one of the opposite boxes, a person that at once attracted his whole attention. It was a woman past the bloom of youth, but yet extremely lovely, though art appeared in some measure to supply the ravages that intemperance had made on beauty. Her arms were naked far above the elbow, and her bosom uncovered even sufficiently to have occasioned disgust in any but the breast of a libertine; nevertheless, this woman entirely attracted William's attention, and, for the time, he not only banished the play, but every other object, from his thoughts. He gazed as if he doubted his sight—sighed—got up—sat down—and at length, unable to bear the torments that

distracted him, fondly as he loved his boy, desired him to remain where he was until he again rejoined him.

The lady, whose eyes had been thrown around in search of prey, had observed the peculiar attention she inspired, and in her turn had carefully examined the person of William, who was as distinguishable from the surrounding beaux by the manly beauty of his person, as by the plainness of his habit. Though emotions of the tender kind are seldom felt by ladies of her description, yet her heart sympathized with the emotions of William; her bosom swelled almost to suffocation, her eyes overflowed with tears, and raising them towards Heaven with a look of despair, she hastily left the box in which she was sitting, the moment after William quitted his.

Unacquainted with the theatre, William mistook his way, and though he hastened

hastened round, was too late to meet the object he sought, who had already left the house, all his inquiries being fruitless to trace her; the only intelligence he could procure was from the box-keeper, who informed him she had been a celebrated courtesan, but was now on the decline, and usually attended the boxes every night.

William, more unhappy than he had been for some years, returned immediately to Reuben: and though he forced himself to sit out the rest of the play, was so evidently disordered, that Reuben, wholly interested for his father, saw the curtain drop with pleasure, and attended him to the inn where they lodged, more concerned at his melancholy than amused with the remembrance of what he had seen.

The idea of the lady banished rest during the whole night from William's

liam's pillow; and rising at the dawn of day, leaving his son in a sound sleep, and in the care of his hostess, he inquired the way to the printers of several newspapers, in all of which he ordered the following advertisement to be inserted.

"If E—m—a G—d—n, who fourteen years since left her friends, through the artful persuasions of a worthless man, and who is now known to be very unhappily situated, will return to her relations in Cumberland, or inquire for her brother, W—l—m G—d—n, at the Swan, in Lad-lane, he will receive her with open arms; and she may yet meet the forgiveness of a parent before he drops into the grave."

This advertisement, though repeated for a whole month, during which he remained in town for that purpose, met no reply, nor were his visits to the theatres more availing. At length he was obliged

obliged to depart, leaving, however, with his hostess, a very particular message respecting the person who might apply, and an order for any money she required.

During William's stay in London he also made particular inquiries after Edwin; but uncertain where to apply, was obliged to have recourse to the heirs of Mr. Delmer, as his lady's jointure falling to them, he conjectured they might be able to afford some information; but they simply knew that Edwin had turned the whole of his property into money, entered again into the army, and was gone abroad. With some pains William at length found out to what regiment he belonged, and on applying to the agent, gained the farther information that Edwin had, years before, a second time resigned his commission, since which he knew nothing respecting him, but recollected to have heard one of the

officers who belonged to the same regiment say, he was advantageously married.

On William's return to Inglewood he disclosed the intelligence he had received respecting Edwin, but remained totally silent in regard to Emma to all but Mrs. Palmer and Fanny, as that information could but unavailingly have given fresh anguish to his father.

Reuben was pleased to find himself once more at home, and hastily embracing his family, inquired for Mrs. Palmer and Anna; but had scarcely given them time to tell him that both were well, when he declared that he was not in the least tired, but would go and see them; then, with the speed of a greyhound, flew from home, and took the road to the manor-house.

Mrs. Palmer and Anna appeared to participate

participate the pleasure he felt at this meeting. Anna hung round his neck and wept with joy, while Reuben fondly kissed her lips, cheeks, and forehead, saying—"I will never go to London again, Anna; indeed I have been very unhappy."

"Unhappy!" replied Mrs. Palmer. "Pray, my young friend, what made you so?"

"Why, in the first place, madam, my father was uncommonly melancholy, and when we sat down to our solitary meals, and I looked round and saw neither my mother, my grandfathers, my brother, little Agnes, you, madam, nor my Anna, my heart sunk in my bosom, and I was more ready to cry than to eat: then, as I slept in the same room with my father, in the night he would sigh bitterly when he thought I was asleep; but I was as little inclined to forget myself as he was, for when all was quiet, I remembered the pleasures of

 home,

home, and comparing them with the bustle of London, wished we were safe back, and never more to leave Inglewood."

"But surely, Reuben, some of the pleasures, or at least sights of London, amused you," answered Mrs. Palmer.

"They rather surprised than amused me, except the theatres," replied Reuben; "for example, one morning, after pushing through numberless crowds and narrow dirty streets, we came at once to that magnificent building, called St. Paul's, which struck me in a manner I cannot describe! With my father's permission, I walked round it in wonder and admiration, as I had not before supposed such an edifice in the whole world! From thence we proceeded somewhat further, to a place where the noise and confusion of languages brought the tower of Babel so strongly to my mind, that I could not forbear laughing; but my mirth was of short continuance,

for

for a little on one side we passed a place full of the most ill-looking, gloomy beings, I ever saw, many of whom were silent, and apparently lost in thought, their eyes fixed on the ground, their foreheads knit, and their eyebrows scowling; others were talking fast and loud, and seemingly, by the little my ear could catch, enumerating.

"Well, but, Reuben," interrupted Mrs. Palmer, "you saw the Tower, did you not? What think you of that?"

"Why, that was among my disappointments, madam: I expected quite a different building; and when I found a mere jumbled crowd of houses, I was disgusted before I entered."

"But the inner part certainly repaid you for your disappointment," said Mrs. Palmer. "Did you not admire the armoury?"

"I was astonished at the ingenuity, or rather at the patience of the man who placed the weapons; perhaps I should

have viewed them with some pleasure, had not my father given rise to a very disagreeable idea, by saying—'How many widows and orphans think you, Reuben, those instruments of death have made?' This remark disgusted me with them, and on reviewing them, I could almost have fancied the points of the spears were stained with blood."

"But then the other curiosities—the jewel-office, and the wild beasts."

"For the first, madam, I am no judge, though I think they would have delighted my sister Agnes. My father particularly called my attention towards them, by observing how very much to be pitied was the virtuous man whom fate had destined to support such a weight of care as must ever accompany a crown. But, madam, pardon me asking *you* a question:—What are the use of the wild beasts?"

"Indeed, Reuben," replied Mrs. Palmer, "I cannot well answer you; but I suppose

suppose they are kept either for curiosity or amusement."

"I would sooner keep a lamb or a dove," said Anna; "I am sure such ferocious monsters could never amuse me."

"The beasts I see we must give up," added Mrs. Palmer; "but the Abbey —was not you charmed with that, Reuben?"

"Yes, madam, it inspired both pleasure and awe; I was delighted to see monuments erected to genius and merit, and reflected with reverence on the once distinguished characters that surrounded me. At that moment I could almost have wished I had been born to be a warrior; but my father again called off my attention, by pointing to a worm that had been thrown out with some earth, desiring me to notice the difference between that and the worms that fed on plebeians in the churchyard at Inglewood."

" And pray what might be the purport of your observation?" said Mrs. Palmer, laughing.

" Very trifling, madam," answered Reuben, joining her mirth; " but I was aware why my father advanced the subject. He observed with what pleasure I contemplated the tombs of particular characters I had either heard or read of; I therefore pretended to look carefully at the worm, and replied, the only difference I believed was, that this was rather fatter."

' An excellent incentive for a man to become a hero,' returned my father; ' yet so far I must confess, heroes are the best friends to worms, as they procure them most food.'

" We were then shewn the waxwork," continued Reuben—" a number of strange, unmeaning, tawdry, ill-dressed figures, with fixed eyes, and that neither give pleasure nor cause any emotion,

tion, one only excepted; this my father regarded with so much respect, that I involuntarily caught it from him."

"Was it general Monk?" interrupted Mrs. Palmer.

"No, madam, it was lord Chatham. My father afterwards, as we passed through the Park, related such things of him as made me almost ready to run back and look at him again."

"But the theatres, Reuben," said Mrs. Palmer.

"Oh! they delighted me," replied he. "I saw some of Shakespeare's Plays; and while my eyes were wet with the sorrows of one scene, the wit and humour of the next made me almost ready to burst with laughter."

"Well, after all," said Anna, "if the pleasures of London are only what you describe, I see nothing among them to be preferred to a dance on the green in summer, or in the manor-hall in winter."

"Preferred!" replied Reuben; "there

are

are none equal to it, or at least none to my fancy; and if my father goes again, it is Edward's turn to accompany him; I am sure I shall not envy him."



The discourse was here put an end to by the arrival of William, and some others of the family, who, after passing a cheerful evening with Mrs. Palmer, returned home.

CHAPTER VIII.



For near four years after the journey to London, no material occurrence disturbed the harmony at Inglewood. The old men, though now both verging towards eighty, were still able to walk about, their senses perfect, and were neither troublesome to themselves nor others. No news had yet transpired of either

Edwin

Edwin or Emma; and William cherished a hope that his unhappy sister's vices were terminated by death.

Mrs. Palmer, who had the newspapers regularly remitted, one day, in reading the contents of one, became informed that the estate in Jamaica, which had formerly appertained to her uncle Walters, was to be sold, together with the stock and negroes,—" I have a strong inclination," said she to Godwin, who was present, " to make inquiry whether any of the slaves formerly belonging to my uncle are living; I would freely purchase and restore them to liberty. Though I am unacquainted with them, Felix can direct me on the occasion, and will in this case be the most proper commissioner."

The Godwins all warmly applauded the motive; and Felix, being called and consulted, accepted the office with a joy little

little short of rapture. He was now turned of seventy, but declared, that was it not possible to transact the business in London, he would willingly undertake a voyage to Jamaica on such an occasion; but which doubtless would be unnecessary, as the estate was to be sold publicly at Garraway's, if not previously disposed of by private contract; and there must necessarily be an agent in town, who perfectly understood the whole, and what negroes were upon it.

Reuben, it has been before observed, was not particularly partial to London; he therefore had no inclination to take a second journey; but Edward, who was now sixteen, felt the warmest desire to accompany Felix; and whispering his wishes to Reuben, they were soon conveyed to his father, who, willing to gratify him, immediately proposed his accompanying Felix—an offer that was accepted with the utmost pleasure.

Furnished

Furnished with a letter of credit on Mrs. Palmer's banker, a few days after they set off for London, travelling by easy stages in a postchaise, for Felix grew too advanced in years to ride far on horseback. After reposing one day on their arrival, they repaired to the agent, who, however, was unacquainted with any thing but the gross of the business; but referred him to a lady of the name of Fitzmorris, who was sister to the owner, who he observed was out of town; but that he had no doubt the lady could give every information, as she had resided some years on the estate, and was also now accompanied by the owner's daughter, who might assist her recollection.

Thus informed, Felix and his young companion waited on Mrs. Fitzmorris, and were immediately admitted. The lady was not alone; the daughter of Mr. Fitzmorris, a tall girl of fourteen, was seated

seated at work by her side, and possessed one of those fascinating countenances that might almost be said to be impossible to be looked on without interesting the beholder. Her features were exquisitely formed, her complexion brunette, but so clear that every variation of the mantling blood was discernible; her eyes were black and sparkling, but, softened by modesty and gentleness, they appeared rather formed to steal into the heart than take it by surprise; her hair was dark brown, and waved in luxurious negligence down her waist, which shewed the perfect symmetry that might be expected when its growth was completed.

Felix and Edward were received by the eldest lady with politeness, and being informed of the business, coolly approved the motives, while Miss Fitzmorris applauded it with warmth; and laying down her work, viewed the strangers

strangers with a pleasure that sparkled in her eyes.

"I have a list below," said Mrs. Fitzmorris, "of the persons, ages, and names, of all the negroes, which my brother desired me to send to the agent; but I have omitted it through forgetfulness. If you please, we will refer to that; and if any of the negroes there are among those you wish to liberate, I will desire the agent to accommodate you, as Mr. Fitzmorris is now at Bath, and will not, I am sure, disapprove my obliging you."

With these words the lady ordered the list, and with Felix examined accurately the persons and names: Felix, however, only found two of his old acquaintance among them, and those very much advanced in years. While they were thus busied, Miss Fitzmorris had withdrawn for a few minutes, but returned before they had concluded; and drawing

drawing near Edward, while her aunt leaned over the table, gave him a small parcel undirected, and that so cautiously that it was unobserved by any but the party to whom it was presented, who instinctively put it in his pocket, though with a trembling hand.

Felix, furnished with the intelligence he wished, retired with his young companion, who soon informed him of the strange occurrence. They immediately adjourned into the first house of entertainment they found for their purpose; and Edward, with an agitated hand, hastily broke the seal, and found, to his utter astonishment, five bank-notes for ten pounds each, enclosed in a paper containing these lines:—

"As I know neither of you, I cannot address you by name; but my heart whispers you are possessed of humanity,

manity, or the good lady, whose charity leads her to liberate those unhappy negroes, would not make you her agents. My father and aunt are both good people, but are too much accustomed to the West Indies to think on those subjects as your employer does, and have therefore refused me the freedom of a woman-slave and her son, whom I dearly love, for the woman attended my mother in her last illness. What I would request therefore is, that you would condescend to mention this circumstance to the lady, and entreat her to buy them among her number; the purchase will, I fear, be more than I have enclosed, which is all I at present possess, and what I have been these two years accumulating for that purpose; but tell her, if I live, I will gratefully repay the overplus, ever esteem myself her debtor, and love her dearly for interest.

" EDITHA FITZMORRIS.

"P. S. Let me know the lady's name, if

if she condescends to grant my request.
The slave alluded to is called Julia, and
her son Scipio."

The amazement of Felix and Edward at the contents of this letter is easier to be conceived than described. The open freedom of the young lady charmed the old man,—" Ah, sweet maid !" cried he, " I am sorry your father is going to sell the plantation; my poor countrymen will not, I fear, find such another kind mistress."

" Then she is such a lovely girl, Felix," returned Edward; " I thought she looked like an angel even before she spoke. I wish she lived near Inglewood; my sister Anna would, I am sure, be charmed with her: as it is, we shall never see her more. But what do you mean to do in regard to the woman and her son whom she has mentioned?"

" Free them most certainly," answered

ed Felix; "I am worth more than twice as much money as will do that, and will willingly expend it in such a cause. Her notes I will return, she will find many uses for them; and there is no occasion to let her know the address, as it will but put her to straits to endeavour to repay the money."

"Then," replied Edward, "we shall not even hear of her again; yet, perhaps, as you say, it would but distress her."

Felix and Edward then adjourned to their lodging, where, on farther investigation of the business, it was agreed that Felix, on the next morning, should again wait on Mrs. Fitzmorris, pretend to look over the list of slaves, and fix on the two additional ones specified by the young lady.

Felix then inclosed the notes ready to return to her: Edward wished to write

a line

a line with them, and sat down to execute his purpose, but in vain. After repeatedly beginning, and tearing the paper, he gave up the attempt, unable to satisfy himself in what he wished to express.

The next day Felix and his young companion waited on Mrs. Fitzmorris so early that the lady was not risen, but sent down to request they would wait a quarter of an hour, when she would attend them.

They were then shewn into a parlour, but had scarcely taken a seat when Miss Fitzmorris entered: a crimson blush for a moment dyed the cheeks of Edward, which as speedily communicated to those of the young lady.—"Ah!" said she, "I fear you think me a strange bold girl; but, indeed, necessity forces me to be so; for if my poor Julia and her boy were sold, it would break my heart.

The

The money allowed for books and my pocket I have long been hoarding, and will as soon as possible make up the remainder of the sum."

"They shall be freed, young lady," replied Felix, "never fear; but as I am ready to oblige you in this business, you must also, in your turn, favour me, by taking back your money—a heart like yours will often find occasion for it. For me, I am an old man, and have an earnest wish to do a good action before I die; let this be it: you look too gentle to be proud, and I flatter myself will not disdain to be obliged by a negro."

"Disdain!" replied she, holding out her hand with the freedom of an old acquaintance—"no; I will think of your kindness as the kindness of a father. Alas!" continued she, "my father called my request folly, and so did my aunt; but you have complied with it, and made me happy, though, indeed, you must take the money."

"Not now," replied the old man; "I

will demand it hereafter. If I humour you, you must also humour me."

Felix now presented the notes, which were with great reluctance received by the young lady; and Mrs. Fitzmorris entering soon after, the business was brought forward; Felix again examined the list, and fixing on the mother and son, requested they might be added to his number, saying, that he had some confused recollection of knowing the former when he resided on Mr. Walters's estate, though she then belonged to a different master.

This request was readily agreed to, and Felix departed with a line from Mrs. Fitzmorris to the agent, requiring him to suffer the bearer to purchase the slaves specified. Felix and Edward being fortunate enough to meet with him at home, the business was completed; and a sum over and above the agreed price left in his hands, to transmit to the persons

sons

sons liberated, either to assist them in Jamaica, or to enable them to reach their benefactress, to whose lawyer in town they were directed.

Felix and Edward passed some short time afterwards in London, to gratify the curiosity of the latter; and then returned to Inglewood, where they were received with delight, though Mrs. Palmer was grieved that no more of her uncle's slaves survived to experience her bounty.

All were particularly pleased with the behaviour of Editha Fitzmorris, in whose praise Edward was never weary. The purchase of her favourites had cost an hundred pounds, which no persuasion could make Felix swerve from insisting to pay, though Mrs. Palmer would willingly have had the young lady her debtor: she was, however, constrained to resign in his favour.

Editha was now the constant theme of the younger part of the family: Anna would frequently wish she was acquainted with her; and Reuben did not fail to express pleasure at her character; but all praise was cold to Edward's, for with him she was at once a miracle of goodness and beauty.

"Ah, Reuben!" said he, one day when alone with his brother, "I have often thought our sister a lovely girl, but she is not to be compared with Miss Fitzmorris; her fine hazel eyes are far superior to Anna's blue ones; and do not you think dark hair more beautiful than light?"

"Not I, indeed," replied Reuben, warmly: "I do not dispute but she may be a likely girl; but to say that she is handsomer than Anna is ridiculous. No one can persuade me that any eyes can exceed hers in loveliness—the sky itself is not of a more charming colour: and then Anna's hair; can any dark locks

equal

equal that? No—surely, Edward, you must be a very bad judge, for Anna's hair is the finest I ever saw; it is the first shade of bright brown, and in the sun looks like threads of waving gold."

Felix at that minute entering, the dispute was referred to him, and he was appointed judge between them.—" Indeed," said he, " young men, you have set me rather a difficult task; your sister Anna is a lovely fair girl, and Miss Fitzmorris, though brown, equally lovely; therefore I cannot give to either the superiority: your opinions of beauty, it seems, are different, and opposite to your own persons; for Reuben himself has dark eyes and hair, yet he admires fair complexions; while Edward, on the contrary, is light-coloured, and is charmed with the brown. My countrymen," added the old man, laughing, " are not so puzzled; our beauties are all of a colour."

The warm attachment between Reuben and Anna, while it pleased the family, yet sometimes gave them a sentiment of sorrow. Fanny, particularly, would frequently lament that she had acknowledged her, as otherwise she might have become the wife of her son.

The partiality of Mrs. Palmer for Anna, added to her own lovely form, in the mean time, notwithstanding her youth, brought her some unexceptionable offers; but, as both her reputed parents and Mrs. Palmer declared her at liberty on that subject, they were rejected.

"Ah, madam!" said she to Mrs. Palmer, "I will never leave you; for where can I be so happy? Not my mother herself is dearer to my heart: she, Heaven be praised, has many to comfort her, but you," continued she, fondly kissing her, "have only your poor grateful Anna!"

"Far

"Far be it from me," replied Mrs. Palmer, "even to wish to be separated from you, my love; yet, Anna, I cannot but say I should like to see you happily settled."

"And so I am," replied she. "Ah, madam! I always pray that you may live to such a good age as my grandfathers; and then, you know, we shall be both old together."

"Six or seven and thirty years will always make some difference between us," answered Mrs. Palmer with a smile; "however, be assured in the article of marriage you are totally your own mistress."

The affection of Mrs. Palmer for Anna knew no bounds; she regarded her as a tender blossom she had reared, and gloried in the expansion of virtues she had inculcated, introducing her to those few friends she regarded, as a beloved child; and ever, when speaking of her, using the name of Anna Palmer—an appellation, as

 it

it gratified her benefactress, that she was generally called by, not only by the domestics, but even by the whole neighbourhood—Mrs. and Miss Palmer being the common distinction.

CHAPTER IX.

Mrs. Palmer had now passed near nineteen years in the peaceful retreat which her heart approved, when she one day received a letter from her attorney in town, entreating her to hasten to the metropolis, as her father, who was now above eighty, and not expected to live long, had expressed the most ardent wish to see her before he died. His son had been some years dead, since which event, the influence of his wife had been in vain exerted to divert him from the earnest desire he had to once more embrace

brace his now only child. Determined, at all events, to satisfy himself on a subject so near his heart, he had employed her attorney to make his will, and likewise requested him to send her word that he wished to see her in town.

Mrs. Palmer immediately replied to her correspondent, that she would set off for London as speedily as possible, entreating him in the mean time to procure her either a small house ready furnished, or convenient lodgings, as she did not choose, if even invited, to be under the same roof with her mother-in-law. Anna she proposed to take with her; but her old and faithful Felix was now too feeble to undertake such a journey, the last being almost too much for his strength.

Anna, though tenderly attached to Mrs. Palmer, felt but little predilection for the journey; and the evening before

they were to depart, when she took leave of the family, appeared overwhelmed with grief.

"With no one but your best friend, my love, would I trust you," said Fanny, as she embraced her, "but under her guidance you are safe; for, though bred and educated in that nursery of vice, how spotless and unblemished has ever been her conduct! I shall anxiously wait your return, for my happiness can never be complete while any of you are absent; and I sincerely confess, I hope to find you as little pleased with London as your brother Reuben was; for I cannot but say, I fear my Edward was rather partial to it."

"No, indeed, my dear mother," replied Edward; "I certainly should like to see it once more, though not from any particular attachment to the place; I only wish to hear what Miss Fitzmorris says respecting her slaves, and to know

know whether she is well; she must surely have a cruel father to refuse her such a request. Ah!" continued he, with energy, "I wish she was your daughter, or any farmer's daughter near Inglewood; she would then, I think, be much happier, and I am sure I should never wish to see London again."

Fanny saw with concern that, young as her son Edward was, his heart was prepossessed in favour of Editha; but trusting to time to remove so early an impression, she passed from the subject to some other less interesting to him.

"Mrs. Palmer," said Anna, resuming the conversation, "has determined to visit Mrs. Fitzmorris when she goes to town, and thank her for the trouble she took concerning the slaves, if it is only to form an acquaintance between her niece and myself."

"Oh, how kind and good!" exclaim-
 ed

ed Edward: "how charmed will you be with her, Anna! I am sure you must love her. Tell her we talk of her at Inglewood, and wish her as happy as her company would make us."

"You, Reuben," said Anna, "will write to me, I know, and tell me every particular respecting home; and in return, I will inform you of every circumstance that happens in town."

Reuben threw his arms fondly round her, a tear trembling in his eye.—"Ah, Anna!" said he, "I have frequently lamented that you were brought up from home; had that not been the case, we should not now have been separated."

"It will be but for a short time, my brother," replied she, kissing his cheek, "and I shall return to Inglewood with rapture; for what can make me amends for being separated from such dear friends?—I am sure, Reuben, if I had my will, I would wish never to be parted from you."

Fanny regarded them in silence, while a tear stole down her cheek; but Mrs. Palmer at that moment joining them, the conversation became general, until the parties separated, after repeated adieus, embraces, and tears.

On the morning following, Mrs. Palmer and Anna set off for London, where they arrived after a pleasant journey of five days, and found all prepared for their reception, Mrs. Palmer's correspondent having punctually obeyed her orders.

CHAP

CHAPTER X.

It was in the beginning of the month of January that Mrs. Palmer and Anna set off for London, leaving the family at Inglewood more oppressed with their absence than the gloom of the season. The weather was particularly severe, the snow had fallen in great quantities, and prevented the poor from having recourse to their usual industry. In this distress William had stepped forth, though without ostentation, and supplied them with corn at a reduced price, and even to many, who were yet more distressed, without payment—a conduct that, if he was before beloved, made him now perfectly idolized.

One night, after being employed during

ring the whole day in these humane and charitable distributions, he retired early to rest, satisfied with himself, and recounting every particular to his Fanny.

The clock had struck eleven before either felt inclined to sleep; the wind blew a perfect hurricane, the rain and mingled snow beat against the window, and Fanny, in the charity of her heart, had recommended to the protection of Heaven all who were exposed to the inclemency of the night, when in the intervals of the tempest, a kind of hollow moan struck her ear. She listened, and again heard the same sound, but so blended with the storm as to render it uncertain from whence it could proceed. Alarmed, she shook William, who was almost asleep, and bade him listen; but all was again quiet, except the weather; and William would fain have persuaded her that what she had heard was merely the wind.

"Alas!

"Alas! I fear not," said Fanny; "I rather dread it is some unhappy creature who is lost in the snow, and perhaps by this time is incapable of any exertion, for the voice seemed faint and near, and I am convinced was human."

Nothing more was necessary to awaken the humanity of William. He arose hastily, and putting on his clothes, as did also Fanny, they descended, calling first to awaken their sons, and to tell the old men, who asked the reason of their rising, that they feared some one was bewildered in the snow, as Fanny had heard a voice of distress apparently very near, desiring them to lie still, and they should be informed of their success. Reuben and Edward were dressed in a moment, and sallied out, accompanied by their father, in search of the cause of their alarm. After having repeatedly hallooed round the house and adjacent grounds without receiving any answer,

they

they determined to return from their successless errand. Fanny in the mean time had not been idle; hoping they would meet with the distressed object, she had stirred up the kitchen fire, and fetched out a bottle of wine and spice, in order to prepare what she thought necessary on such an occasion, when again, in an interval of silence from the storm, she heard the sound that had first alarmed her, but more faint, and, to her imagination, almost close to the house.

Fanny was no coward; and placing her candle in a lantern, she went out, and looked cautiously around, but could see nothing, yet again heard a groan. Convinced now that it proceeded from the wood shed, she hastened thither, and holding up her light, said—"If any one is near, let them speak, and they shall have immediate assistance."

Her only answer was another groan; but

but the light at that moment discovered to her sight a human form lying on the ground, if not lifeless, at least so benumbed with cold as to be almost reduced to the last extremity. Fanny now felt greatly alarmed, though not sufficiently so as to prevent her using means to assist the sufferer; and finding she was unable alone to be of much service, left the shed to call her servant-maids; but meeting with her husband and sons, who were returning from their fruitless errand, informed them of the discovery she had made, and that the unhappy object was a woman. Reuben being first, lifted her in his arms, and carried her into the house, where all were now employed in her service; Edward in heaping piles of wood on the fire, Reuben in warming wine, and their father and mother in chafing and endeavouring to recover the stranger. Her face was distorted by convulsions, the pale livery of death appeared to overshadow.

dow every feature; and for some time all their cares were ineffectual; but at length the convulsive spasms, being solely occasioned by cold, appeared to decrease, and her features to settle into their regular form.

William and Fanny had their eyes fixed upon her; but as her features recovered their proper symmetry, theirs became imprinted with horror, amazement, and pity; and withdrawing their look from the object that had before totally employed them, they now endeavoured to read each other's thoughts.

"It is impossible!" exclaimed William; "yet surely I cannot be mistaken! —it is—it is my sister—the unhappy, lost Emma!"

"It is indeed our Emma!" replied Fanny, "and blessed be the hour that restores her to us; it is a proof that she has abjured her errors, and who can refuse

fuse her forgiveness? You have frequently, my sons, heard us lament her unhappy deviation from rectitude, which, from what you now see, has been followed by the most direful consequences. Retire; her senses may speedily return, and it might occasion a relapse to find other witnesses than your father and myself; we will call if more help is necessary. In the mean time, let not a word transpire to your grandfather of what has passed; for if he is informed too suddenly, it may prove fatal."

"Be it as your mother has said, my sons," added William; "her prudence, even in this surprise, I see, has not forsaken her."

Reuben and Edward immediately withdrew in silence, deeply impressed with compassion. A few spoonfuls of warm wine were with much difficulty got down Emma's throat, and her senses began to return; but fixing her eyes on William,

William, she slid from her seat to the ground, holding her hands in a suppliant posture.

Fanny dropped by her side, and pressing her to her bosom, exclaimed—"Fear not, Emma; you are thrice welcome to your native home. Have you forgotten that there is more joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety-and-nine just persons who need no repentance? And shall it not on earth be the same?—nay, weep not, nor wring your hands thus."

"Oh, say," at length sobbed Emma, in a voice far from articulate, "is not my father dead? Miserable wretch that I am, I can never receive his forgiveness."

"Not so," replied William; "he is yet spared to afford you that comfort, if you merit it; but, for the present, endeavour to recruit your strength by refreshment and rest; our father must not

this

this night be told of your return; his age, and the repeated shocks he has received, might render such information dangerous; he shall simply be told we have succoured some one bewildered in the snow."

"And can you, William," answered Emma, as she yet more recovered, "and you, virtuous Fanny, can you forgive a wretched prostitute? Ah, no! you cannot when you know the extent of my crimes; they are beyond human forgiveness—nay, I fear, beyond the reach of divine mercy!"

As she spoke, her head sunk on her bosom, and for some moments she appeared overpowered with anguish.—"Ah! happy abode of my youth and innocence!" at length she exclaimed, gazing around her—"And shall I be permitted to draw my last polluted breath under this roof, stained as I am with a thousand vices? Will Heaven permit

it?

it? Ah, no! when you know all, you will spurn and detest me, as I do myself."

"Alas!" answered Fanny, "whatever may have been your faults, repentance and your present misery will, I trust, atone for them. William, your sister is at present unable to walk—let us bear her to bed; after which go to our parents, and if they are not asleep, relate what has happened, without mention of person."

William now bore Emma in his arms to the bedchamber, where he left her with his wife, who undressed her; and was not a little shocked to see the emaciated state of her body, her bones being almost sharp enough to break through the skin that covered them.

Having placed her in bed, Fanny would fain have persuaded her to take some refreshment, but she declined it.

Fanny

Fanny judging rest the most salutary to her exhausted frame, for a short time retired, and joined William, who waited for her below stairs.

The strangeness of the whole occurrence employed all their thoughts and conjectures. Emma's dress was clean, though of the most simple kind. Her features, though much emaciated, were yet lovely; and notwithstanding she was past the age of thirty-six, might still have been accounted captivating.

Several times during the night did the kind and attentive Fanny steal into the apartment to look on the poor penitent, but constantly found her awake; and listening at the door, heard her always earnest in prayer.

CHAP-

CHAPTER XI.

In the morning, Godwin and Bernard inquired in the kindest manner after the stranger, of whom they had no suspicion beyond what had been told them, until after breakfast, William, having sent his sons and servants on different errands, determined to disclose the truth of the business.—"My father," said he, addressing Godwin, "I grieve whenever I reflect on the many sorrows that have embittered your life; it is to me a proof that even virtue is not a security for happiness here below; for whose life has been more spotless, and yet who has felt more calamity? But, my father, you have borne up nobly, have struggled with affliction, and will not, I trust, sink under a surprise, which on the

whole must give you more pleasure than pain."

"My son," replied the old man, calmly, "the Power who has hitherto supported will not at this hour, I trust, forsake me: speak then, and fear not; I feel thy care; thou watchest my age with the tenderness of a parent, and hast been the prop of my declining years; but for thee, William, and thy angel wife, I had long since sunk into the grave, but thy duty and affection have supported me, and I have lived even to the time when man's days are said to be labour and sorrow; yet it is not so with me: wherever I look round I see blessings, and bow with reverence to Heaven, who, though it has afflicted, has also blessed me beyond the common lot of man."

"Best of men and parents!" replied William, "our sister Emma is returned penitent, and I hope worthy your forgiveness."

Neither

Neither age nor time had sufficiently blunted the feelings of Godwin to hear this intelligence without emotion. The old man turned pale, an universal trembling shook his frame, and for a moment he cast his eyes anxiously around, then sunk senseless on the bosom of his son. His situation for some time caused alarm; but by the cares of his attentive children he was at length recovered; and rising, he said—"Lead me, lead me to my misguided daughter; if she is indeed repentant, I have but one wish remains unsatisfied, and that is, if Edwin lives, that he may be the same."

"Precipitation, my father," replied William, "might be fatal; Emma is greatly reduced; we will first, if you please, inform her you condescend to see her, and that she may hope for your

"Be it so," replied Godwin; "in the mean time I will retire, and offer up my

heartfelt thanks for this unexpected blessing."

Godwin now took the arm of his son, while Fanny retired to inform Emma that her father was apprised of her arrival, and to prepare her for his presence.

During the absence of Fanny, Emma, weak as she was, had risen, and sat dressed by the bedside; she had apparently been weeping; and on the entrance of her sister, dropped on her knees, and entreated her to plead for her with her father.

Fanny, in the most gentle terms, told her that he was informed of what had passed; at the same time conjuring her to be careful of her behaviour, as she dreaded any strong emotion at that time of life might be fatal.

At

At length the sound of feet on the stairs gave notice of William and his father's approach; and Emma, unable to suppress the alarm that overpowered her, sunk on the bed, exclaiming in a voice of terror—" Open, earth, and hide from the presence of a virtuous father a monster, unworthy to see the light —a prostitute—a parricide—a——Oh, Great God! my crimes crush me! and, infinite as is thy mercy, I dare not hope to meet it!"

At that moment the door opened, and Emma, with more exertion than she appeared capable of, threw herself from the bed at the feet of her father, crying—" Mercy! mercy!" while Godwin could not speak, but gazed in silence on his once beautiful and innocent daughter. " Oh, my father!" added she, " you cannot forgive me; but crush me even beneath your feet, and I will bless you."

The old man for a moment raised his eyes to heaven, then turned with a look

 of

of compassion, and sobbing aloud, exclaimed—"Oh, blessed saint! if thou art permitted to view us at this moment, plead at the Throne of Mercy for this thy unhappy daughter, who, I trust, has abjured her errors!"

"Oh, my father!" cried Emma, "does the slaughtered lamb entreat for the wolf that has shed its blood? How then can a murdered parent plead at the Throne of Mercy for the parricide that plunged her into an untimely grave? Ah! Heaven would reject the prayer, and pour fresh horrors on my devoted head: yet curse me not, my father; my guilt is sufficient, and my punishment, though perhaps not adequate to my faults, yet has been severe; the hand of God I am convinced is on me, then add not your hatred to the blow."

"If my forgiveness can sooth thee, thou hast it," replied Godwin; "thy errors have been great; let thy repentance be exemplary."

Emma

Emma was for some moments unable to reply; she clasped her father's knees, and, in the humiliation of her heart, kissed the ground on which he stood. At length she exclaimed—"Ah! you know not the extent of my crimes, or you would not pardon me! vice has brought me to the very gates of hell; atrocious in guilt, Heaven has been exemplary in my punishment."

"Whatever may have been thy errors," replied Godwin, "I trust sincere repentance may obliterate them; to thy own heart recapitulate, and to God alone confess them. Thy pallid countenance betokens ill health; soon mayest thou, perhaps, be summoned before that awful tribunal, from whose justice there is no appeal. The forgiveness of an earthly father thou hast, Emma; none but thyself can procure that of thy heavenly one."

William, who dreaded to prolong a

scene so painful to both, now addressed his father, saying—" Our sister, sir, requires rest; suffer me to attend you for a while; in an hour or two both will be more composed, and equal to another meeting."

" Be it so," replied Godwin, taking his son's arm. " Emma, seek repentance, and thou shalt even yet find peace. Farewell! thou shalt not want my prayers."

" Blessings on his honoured head!" cried Emma, as he left the apartment. " Alas! how has sorrow changed him!"

" Time as well as sorrow," replied Fanny, " have contributed towards the alteration: his health, however, thank Heaven, is far better than it was some years back; your return too will, I trust, add to his comfort. Could we now but hear that Edwin, if he is living, had renounced his vices, we should have but little to wish."

" Edwin

"Edwin living!" replied Emma, shuddering. "Alas! do you not know he lives?"

"No," answered Fanny, "he has not been seen by any of his family since about four months after my beloved Agnes's death, which is now near seventeen years ago. On that event he quitted the army, but has since re-entered it, as we learned; and also a confused account that he was again married to some woman of large fortune. Oh! may Heaven, if it is so, inspire her with the power to lead him back to virtue!"

"To virtue!" repeated Emma, wildly. "No; Edwin is not returned to virtue, except——" then becoming more calm, she continued—"We began the course of vice together—monsters in iniquity, may our crimes have terminated together!"

"You know then that he is living!" replied Fanny, astonished at the manner in which she spoke.

 "Too

"Too well I know it," answered she; "yet, for pity's sake, ask me not how; nor am I informed of particulars; only that he is rich, and equally abandoned of God as myself!"

"We will not then name him to our father," returned Fanny, with a sigh. "He had better think him dead, or entertain the most distant hope of his reformation, than be told what would lie heavy on his heart."

As Emma appeared faint and exhausted by the conversation, Fanny persuaded her to endeavour to rest, and soon after left her, to disclose to William what she had heard respecting Edwin, and the emotion she shewed at the mention of his name.

"Alas!" said she, "I am convinced she is informed of some horrid circumstance, which perhaps we are happier to be ignorant of. Heaven has brought back

back one wanderer; in its own time perhaps it may also lead back the other."

CHAPTER XII.

Emma, after she had been returned a week to the farm, so far recovered from her fatigue, and the misery she had undergone, that she was able to leave her room; but her health was visibly declining, and a hectic cough, with an expectoration of blood, daily reduced her, though by almost imperceptible degrees. The whole family treated her with peculiar kindness, and spared no pains to recover both her health and spirits—a circumstance that ever called forth the most bitter self-accusation. Her person was even yet lovely, but vanity was dead in her bosom; her hair, which had been

uncommonly fine, was cut off before her return to the country, and her dress she continued equally simple as that she then wore. In the morning she arose with the earliest dawn, and after passing an hour or two in prayer, wrote until breakfast-time, when her eyes were usually swollen with weeping. She afterwards, in spite of all Fanny's entreaties, would assist in domestic occupations until dinner, of which she eat very sparingly, drinking nothing but water; and in the evening a draught of milk, which concluded the regimen of the day, then retired very early, though not to rest, two or three hours being devoted to the same duties as in the morning.

The name of Edwin ever caused her the most violent emotion, and was therefore, as much as possible, suppressed by William and Fanny, without giving suspicion to their father. To the little Agnes Emma was particularly attached;

ed; and if ever for a moment she forgot the sorrow that devoured her, it was in her company.

In the mean time, Mrs. Palmer and Anna were settled in town, where they much feared they should be long detained, as Mr. Sommerton's health was in a most precarious state; and he had lived to be sensible of the attentions of a virtuous daughter, from whom he declared he would be no more separated.

His temper, naturally bad, was now yet more embittered by illness and age; and though he had some years before left his only daughter, her husband and infant, to perish with want, yet now expected that daughter to devote herself to him. She frequently lamented having brought Anna to London with her, as she was under the necessity of either confining her to a sick chamber, or leaving her for whole days together. This consideration

consideration determined her to hasten to form an acquaintance, if possible, with the Fitzmorris family; for if she found them agreeable, Editha, though younger than Anna, would prove an agreeable companion.

One morning therefore with Anna she paid the preliminary visit, and was received with particular respect. Mrs. Fitzmorris, according to the common acceptation of the word, was *a good sort* of woman, but possessed none of those humane sentiments that distinguished her new visitor; of her niece she was particularly fond, and being pleased with the person of Anna, readily acquiesced with Mrs. Palmer in the wish of a farther acquaintance with them. The young girls were mutually delighted with each other; nor was Editha less pleased with Mrs. Palmer, with whom she wished to converse without the restraint of her aunt's presence, and

give

give vent to the overflowings of her heart.

The next morning Mrs. Fitzmorris, to gratify her niece, returned Mrs. Palmer's visit, and invited her and Anna to dinner on the day following—an invitation which, though her attention to her father obliged her to decline for herself, she accepted for Anna, whom she proposed to call for in the evening on her return home.

Anna was delighted with the invitation, and charmed with Editha, who, though not much above fourteen, possessed an understanding uncommon at her years. In the course of the afternoon Mr. Fitzmorris was announced, business calling him to his sister's, whom he seldom visited on any other account, possessing none of that parental fondness for Editha, who constantly resided

with

with her aunt, that many parents might have felt for so amiable a daughter.

On his entrance, the appearance of a stranger excited only an inclination of the head; but after a few minutes the beauty of Anna more particularly engaged his attention, and he condescended not only to address her, but also to congratulate his daughter on so amiable an acquaintance.

Mr. Fitzmorris was apparently not beyond the middle age, but bloated, and bore the appearance of a free liver. In his manners he was haughty and imperious, and in his disposition at once avaricious and prodigal; by every means in his power accumulating wealth, and squandering it in the gratification of every favourite vice.

Such was the father of the artless,

open-

open-hearted Editha, who from her tender years had trembled at the presence of a father, and whose youthful mind had received a severe shock two years before, when she lost a mother, from whom alone she had ever experienced parental affection.

Fitzmorris had also a son, two years younger than Editha, but for whom he appeared to have as little affection, and that he kept constantly at school, perhaps fortunately for the youth; for, at least, it preserved him from the contagious poison of ill example.

Fitzmorris's ideas were too depraved to admire beauty without wishing to possess it; he therefore contemplated the innocent attractions of Anna as the kite doth the dove he means to devour; and on her leaving the room for a short time with his daughter, questioned his sister respecting this new acquaintance.

Mrs.

Mrs. Fitzmorris, who judged from the behaviour of Mrs. Palmer, and the appellation by which Anna was distinguished, that she was undoubtedly her daughter, replied by informing him that she was actually so.

"And who," said he, "is Mrs. Palmer? Have you long known her?"

His sister replied in the negative, saying—"I became acquainted with her merely in consequence of her purchasing, while you was at Bath, those old negroes that I mentioned to you. She is the only daughter to Mr. Sommerton, and is reputed to be immensely rich."

This intelligence was not so pleasing to Fitzmorris as if he had heard Anna was poor and unprotected, for in that case his fortune might have assisted his designs; as it was, he regarded success to be almost impracticable.

Anna

Anna and Editha in the mean time were cementing their new friendship by numbers of little interesting communications.

"Ah, Miss Palmer!" said Editha, "how happy are you to possess such a mother! Indeed I do envy you; but her tenderness, when she addresses you, brings my own so strongly to my remembrance, that my eyes, notwithstanding all my endeavours, overflow with tears. Ah! if you had known her, you must have loved her—even our negroes idolized her. Their bitter lamentations on her death even yet make my heart sink when I reflect on them; she was ever their mediatrix, and frequently turned the anger of my father from them to herself. How often have I wished I had died with her!"

"That wish is wrong, my dear Miss Fitzmorris," replied Anna, "and almost ungrateful to those dear friends you have

left.

left. Have you not a tender father and a good aunt?"

"That is true," answered Editha; "but my father's manner is so distant, that, though I often long to embrace and clasp his neck, yet I dare not, he looks so coldly on me. I hope he loves me, Anna; but I sometimes fear he does not."

"He must love you," replied Anna, warmly. "How can he avoid it, when even I, that know you so little, love you? Mrs. Palmer too, the worthy Felix, my brother, and all, are charmed with you."

"Your brother! Was that youth your brother then that accompanied the good old man who came to purchase the negroes, and to whom I am so much indebted for his goodness?"

"Yes, my younger brother, Edward," answered Anna. "I have also a brother called Reuben, and a sweet young sister named Agnes."

"Bless me," cried Editha, "you

amaze

amaze me! I understood you were Mrs. Palmer's only child, by the manner in which she spoke of you."

"You misunderstood her kindness, my dear," replied Anna; "Mrs. Palmer is only my godmother; but brought up with her from my infancy, the name is more familiar to me than my own: I love her equally with my mother, and she, I am sure, loves me as her child."

"That is sufficiently evident," answered Editha. "Happy, happy Anna, to have two mothers, and perhaps a tender father!"

"Yes, my love, a dear, kind, and affectionate one; and who, though only a farmer, is universally respected and beloved."

"Rich, rich Anna!" exclaimed Editha, "I would I was your sister, and my poor brother also yours!"

Thus ended the discourse, but not the impression it made on both. Anna's heart

heart was afflicted for the gentle Editha, who appeared to deserve more tenderness than she apparently met with. Editha, on her part, reflected on the happiness of Anna, and was astonished to find she was not Mrs. Palmer's daughter, as that lady always addressed her with *my dear child;* or speaking of her, said, Anna, or Miss Palmer. That she was a farmer's daughter did not lessen her in Editha's opinion; but she was too well acquainted with both the disposition of her father and aunt not to know it would have a contrary effect on them; yet, too delicate to mention this to her new friend, she determined to say nothing about it to either, but leave the disclosure to chance.

After passing a very agreeable day, Anna returned home in the evening with Mrs. Palmer, who called for her at Mrs. Fitzmorris's; and having thanked that lady for her kindness to Anna, obtained

tained her promise that Editha should pass the ensuing day at her house.

From this time the acquaintance became permanent, and the young folks were seldom a day apart. As Mrs. Palmer was constantly confined with her father, she was overjoyed to find such amusement for Anna, who, in company with Editha, her aunt, and father, the latter frequently condescending to be of the party, visited several public places; yet such was the coldness of manners natural to Mrs. Fitzmorris, and the something still more disgusting in those of her brother, that Anna at most but respected them, and, naturally timid, seldom spoke more in the presence of either than what was absolutely necessary; while, on the contrary, every moment passed alone with Editha was employed in the exchange of their mutual thoughts and observations. Editha, who was less timid, had in the meanwhile

while insensibly made herself an interest in the heart of Mrs. Palmer, whom she would run to meet if she heard her coming; or, when at her house, and only her and Anna present, would steal softly behind her chair, and taking her round the neck, kiss her cheeks, saying —"I have no other way of paying the debt of love I owe you, and I am determined you shall take it thus—thus—and thus," repeatedly saluting her.

Anna, though she was truly attached to Mrs. Palmer and her friend, yet sighed after the calm pleasures of Inglewood; she wrote frequently to the family, and expressed the warmest wishes that her return might be speedy. One of her letters to her supposed mother ran thus:

"MY DEAR, DEAR MOTHER!

"I am sick of this great, noisy, dirty town, and am hourly wishing that my

my good mamma's duty would permit her to return to Inglewood; but as yet we have no prospect of such happiness, as Mr. Sommerton's health is still in the same precarious state. We have formed an acquaintance with the Fitzmorris family; and I am quite delighted with Editha, whom I truly believe is one of the best, as she is the handsomest girl I ever saw. Her aunt, Mrs. Fitzmorris, is a very good woman, and fond of her; but her partiality is so strangely shewn, that it does not reach the heart, like such kindness as my father and you ever express for me. She never says my love—nor Editha—nor my child, as you address us; but Miss Fitzmorris, or Miss Editha, as if she was speaking to a stranger—then holds long tedious discourses about the distinctions due to birth and fortune. She likewise frequently chides Editha for addressing the domestics as if they were her equals, though I can assure you it has no bad

 effect,

effect, for they almost adore her, and are ready to dispute who shall first fly to serve her.

"Mr. Fitzmorris has been a handsome man, and appears about ten years older than my father, yet perhaps he is not so much; but he has a fixed gloom on his features, and an habitual frown that keeps one at a distance, and which Editha feels as much as me, though she is his only daughter, and is accustomed to it; yet he is very kind, and I feel myself ungrateful in thus finding fault with him.

"Editha has a brother at Winchester-school, who she is very fond of, but whom she sees rarely, as her father does not suffer him to come home except at the vacations. Oh, my mother! how unlike you and my father!—I am vain enough to think you have as often wished for me at home again as I myself have sighed after it.

"I have seen a great many fine things; but

but indeed several of them tired me even at the moment, and would yet more so were I to attempt giving a description of them; I shall therefore omit them until we meet round our dear fireside: I will then produce them against Reuben and Edward, who have been travellers as well as myself, and the first of whom, I well remember, was as glad to get back as I shall be. My dear mamma yesterday made me a present of a purse, containing so much money that I would fain not have taken it, as I had in reality no occasion for it; but she insisted on my obedience, and not only so, but of my buying what was most pleasing to me: I have therefore purchased knee and shoe buckles for my father and brothers—two walking-canes for my dear grandfathers—a gown for you—a frock for Agnes, and what she will like still better, the prettiest doll I could meet with.

"Adieu, my beloved mother. I need

not

not bid you remember me in your prayers. Kiss all the dear family a hundred times for me, and believe me your

"Grateful and affectionate daughter,

"ANNA PALMER GODWIN.

"I had almost forgotten to tell you that I am so fine sometimes when I go out with Mrs. Fitzmorris, that I feel uncomfortable; but it has been merely to gratify her taste for show, as I now frequently accompany her in public. Mrs. Palmer said the other day—'My dear Anna, we will throw by all these useless decorations when we get home; and if our unadorned manners and persons cannot procure us respect, we will endeavour to be satisfied without it."

CHAP-

CHAPTER XIII.

Anna's letters were ever received with delight at Inglewood, particularly as they all breathed the pure spirit of a heart uncontaminated by either pleasure or pride.

Fanny and Emma were alone when the former received this last epistle, and having read it, reached it to her sister: "Charming innocence!" said she, as she returned it, "may Heaven at least not be deaf to this prayer—mayest thou walk through life untainted as thou art at present! but I have no doubt thou wilt, for thou possessest not those detested seeds of vanity that brought me to my ruin. Ah, Fanny! well do I remember my unnaturally pressing my

mother to suffer me go to London. Agnes too asked it for me; yet she wept to see my mother's reluctance, and said, that, had she been in my place, she would not have made a parent so uneasy to purchase a kingdom. But I was deaf to all but my vanity, though I was then far from thinking of committing evil, and only wished to be dressed, and partake of those pleasures which the unhappy Whitmore and his sister described to me. He had awakened those sentiments of pride that were natural to me, and I longed to shew myself and be ad mired."

"Alas!" replied Fanny, "how deceived were your father and mother in the character of that unhappy man! —his sister, poor woman, was punished, I fear, for it is plain Edwin never loved her."

"Edwin!" repeated Emma, with the usual emotion the name ever occasioned: "Edwin!—would to God he had perished

perished in the cradle, or I in my mother's womb!"

"My dear Emma," replied Fanny, "far be it from me to wish to distress you; but the impression the name of Edwin makes on you is almost dreadful! That he was Whitmore's murderer is too true; but the hand of God alone suffered Edwin to become the avenger of his family, and to be the scourge of those vices he had so perniciously inculcated: endeavour then, my sister, to think on him with less anguish."

"Never!" interrupted Emma. "For the death of Whitmore, Heaven forgive both him and me; for surely my follies contributed towards it, as much as his false ideas of honour: but there are more latent causes—causes which, once known, would make *you* shrink, though guiltless, nay, spurn me again to misery! Never, my virtuous sister, can I shock your chaste ears with recitals so horrid as the events of my life! It was, indeed,

my first intention, but I found it would be impossible—I have therefore done as my father advised: I have recapitulated my errors to my own heart, and confessed them to God. Ah! would to Heaven my present contrition or tears could obliterate them!—but it is in vain, my repentance comes too late. Ah! how often in my sleep has my mother seemed to stand before me, and reproach me with her death, the vices of my own life, and prognostigate the final destruction that awaited me!"

Though Fanny endeavoured, by every means in her power, to soften the poignancy of the grief that evidently undermined the constitution of Emma, yet all was unavailing; she grew daily weaker, and at length was unable to leave her chamber, though she still employed herself in writing, and never laid down to sleep without first imploring not only the forgiveness of Heaven for her offences,

fences, but also of her father. In short, her penitence and humility interested all, giving at once pain and pleasure; the first from the cruel reflection that her vices had made so severe a penance necessary, and the last, that her life had not only been happily prolonged beyond her guilt, but that Heaven had given her time and inclination for repentance.

At length she was reduced so much as to be obliged to keep her bed, at times was delirious, and so violently agitated, that her sufferings were terrible to the spectators.

Fanny now, even upon her knees, entreated her father-in-law to be absent from such a scene of horror.

" No," said the old man; " my child is penitent, and shall I abandon her at this hour? In her lucid intervals I will

pray by her, and endeavour to inspire her with hope. Ah, Fanny! thou art thyself now a parent, and at once nobly performest the duties of a daughter and a mother; say, couldst thou, though Heaven forbid thou shouldst ever have the trial, couldst thou, at such a fearful moment, refrain from administering all the comfort in thy power.

"Alas, no, my father!" replied Fanny; "but my fear for your health makes me thus anxious. The loss of Emma, just restored to us, and as suddenly snatched away, will indeed be hard to bear; and should it also deprive us of you, we shall sink beneath the blow."

"The consciousness of having acted right, even in that case, Fanny, will support you. It is now nineteen years since the happy day that you became the wife of William; nor have I, in that period, seen one morn or eve without blessing the hour that united you.

You

You are the mother of my old age, and your children the comforts of my second childhood."

Bernard, who was sitting by the fire-side with Agnes between his knees, nursing her new doll, raised his eyes as Godwin ceased speaking, and replied—"Sure enough Fanny has ever been a dutiful daughter and a good wife; but if she is ten times better, William is deserving of her."

"They are worthy of each other," returned Godwin; "nor, to my knowledge, has one a virtue that the other does not equally possess."

Godwin then adjourned to his daughter's chamber, whom he found calm, but extremely weak and exhausted; kneeling by her, he prayed long and fervently; then, in a discourse replete with true devotion, pointed out the infinite mercy of God, blessed and kissed her.—"Emma," said he, "thy life has been short,

and full of sin and sorrow; mine has been long, and also replete with error; yet, I doubt not, with true repentance, we shall meet again in the land of peace, to part no more!"

Emma was at first too much affected to reply, but pressed her father's hand, and bathed it with her tears. At length, struggling with her emotion, she exclaimed, faintly—"Ah! my father, the polluted parricide Emma will never be permitted to share the rewards of the righteous!"

"Desponding woman!" answered Godwin, "shall thy contracted understanding set limits to God's mercy?—Never, never yet, Emma, did he reject a repentant and contrite heart."

Godwin soon after withdrew, and Emma fell asleep; during which, Fanny was joined by her husband, both anxiously remaining by her until she awoke.

Her

Her strength being somewhat recruited by the rest she had obtained, her delirium on her first awakening was uncommonly vehement, and required all William's strength and tenderness to at once oblige and sooth her to remain in bed.—"I will go to Inglewood," exclaimed she; "my mother commanded it—your paths are the paths of hell—my soul shall never again know pollution—I despise your threats; what are prisons to me?" Then looking at William with a fixed horror, she cried—"Be gone, Edwin—fiend—monster—any thing but brother!" Then in a lower voice—"You are, I know, a man of blood; you murdered Whitmore; but that you may wash your hands from—his wife will forgive you, for she set you upon the deed, I suppose; but who shall forgive you this last, this worst, this detestable——?" Exhausted by the exertion, as she uttered the last word she sunk on the pillow, and after

some

some little time appeared to sleep, while William and his trembling wife looked at each other in silent terror.—After remaining tolerably composed for half an hour she again awoke, but more placid, and apparently insensible of her last delirium.—"My kind brother and sister," said she, "for you permit me to call you so, unworthy as I am, Heaven will, I hope, requite your goodness to me. In the little drawer belonging to the table is a manuscript, which contains the fatal history of my errors. I could not have a heart to relate them, but imposed the penance on myself of recapitulating them thus. Oh! do not hate and despise me while you read, nor, unless you hold it particularly necessary, do not shew it to my father; not to conceal my own shame do I speak, but because the recital would sink him to the grave. Nay, why do you both weep? My father bids me trust to the mercy of God, and even thinks I may be forgiven. Alas! he

he knows not half my crimes; his words, prayers, and blessings, have however comforted me, and my heart is no longer sunk in despair. One thing now alone presses severely on my spirits, which, perhaps, you will only attribute to the wanderings of sickness, yet which to me always appeared the effect of a divine mission. From the time of my mother's death, in my dreams I frequently saw her, but always with a severe and angry countenance; and in particular, about a month before I came to Inglewood, Heaven alone knows the impression she made on me! Since that time, restless as have been my nights, I have never since seen her; methinks it seems as if she had totally abandoned me; for though she frowned and chid me, her anger has been salutary to my soul, and I feel I could die satisfied, were I even for a moment to see her again."

"My dear sister," replied William, "the life of error you were wont to

lead

lead being, as I trust, contrary to your natural disposition and education, both conspired to give rise to ideas which, however you might banish waking, you could not stifle in those hours when we retrace, with mingled truth and fiction, various subjects. Your mother's death had doubtless made a particular impression on you, and caused you frequently to dream; she uttered those reproaches which your own heart alone dictated. Since your return to virtue, Emma, those self-reproaches have, in some measure, subsided; and your agonized fancy no longer presents the image of an unhappy angry parent."

"It is a natural conclusion, William, for you to make," replied Emma; "yet you know not how strong, how awful the last injunction, which I strictly obeyed; yet, my brother, she has since abandoned me!"

"We will then suppose, my dear sister," replied Fanny, "that the errand of

mercy

mercy on which she was permitted to come, is fulfilled, and that she has no farther business, until she greets you in a most happy eternity."

"Blessed thought!" replied Emma; "yet if I could but once more have seen her, and without that frowning countenance, I confess it would have made me die happy; but God's will be done."

CHAPTER XIV.

For two days after the foregoing discourse, Emma yet struggled hard with anguish; but towards the close of the second evening her approaching dissolution became apparent; her senses had been perfect since the last-mentioned delirium, and her death was as edifying as her life had been erroneous. Surrounded by the whole family, even the old

old men, she joined her prayers and blessings with them, particularly admonishing Reuben and Edward to beware of vice, and tread firm in the paths of rectitude.

The youths listened with pious attention; the dying moralist made an impression more permanent than all the eloquence of learning, or pedantry of books. They beheld a woman yet in the prime of life, and uncommonly lovely, sinking into the grave, the victim of her own errors, and a striking example of the inefficacy of every human endowment without virtue.

The youths each held one of her hands, already covered with the cold damp of death, and pressing it to their lips, promised to remember her injunctions, rendered yet more sacred by the solemn hour in which they were given.

The

The friendly Bernard kissed and wept over her.—" Ah ! Emma," said he, " thou shouldst have striven against this unhappy illness; thou shouldst have lived to nurse us old men; not thus have hurried to the grave before us. What if thou hast been faulty, thou art not the first: God has forgiven thee, I am sure; and let him that hath no sin throw the first stone."

Godwin next approached, his venerable form bent to earth, but his eyes raised to heaven, and praying, he blessed, and repeatedly forgave his dying daughter.

" I had a wish," said Emma, faintly, " to see your Anna; but, deprived of that pleasure, say I blessed her. Agnes, my love," turning to the little girl, " ever be attentive to your parents; forget not your duty, and God will not forget you."

William then approached; his manly

cheeks

cheeks covered with tears, and unable to speak, he pressed her hand to his lips. —"William," said she, "my best, my dearest brother, whose worth, alas! I was sensible of too late, do not hate my memory. My Fanny too, kind sister! nay, weep not: how worthily have you fulfilled the duty which I am ashamed to have neglected! Long may you be happy, worthy pair, and may the blessings of Heaven be multiplied on your heads!"

Emma now appeared exhausted, even to almost fainting; Fanny therefore entreated her to cease speaking, and endeavour to sleep—a desire she immediately complied with, first looking kindly, but fixedly, around on every particular object, as though she would impress her person on their memory; then desiring to be placed rather lower in bed, she, after some time, fell into an apparent heavy sleep, in which she continued without

without struggle, or the least convulsion, for more than two hours, all sitting round in silent dejection, and waiting the event of her next awaking, which they feared would be decisive.

At length she began to stir, and the attentive Fanny was instantly by her side.—" My sister," cried Emma, with a smile, which was the first they had seen enliven her features since her return, " oh! you know not how happy I am; I have again seen my mother, and she told me I am forgiven. Ah! Fanny, I have nothing now to wish—nay, look there," cried she, with exultation, " she comes again; see, she smiles, and beckons me! Blessed sight! I come, my mother," stretching out her arms; " receive your repentant—happy—happy daughter!" As she uttered the last word, her voice died on her lips, her head reclined, and her contrite spirit left its once frail tenement.

" God

"God of mercy and compassion, accept my penitent child!" cried Godwin, falling into the arms of his son; "let her repentance atone for her offences! and may we hereafter meet in heaven!"

"Ah! my father," replied William, "how few have died like Emma! we will therefore bear our sorrow with resignation. Had she indeed died in her errors, we should have had cause to mourn. As it is, how great the mercy of God, not only to awaken her to a sense of her guilt, but bring her home, that we might witness her return to virtue!"

Godwin raised his head from the bosom of his son, and ejaculated—"Blessed be the name of God!" Then taking his arm, he said—"I will go forth. My presence is no longer useful, and the sight is more than my age can well bear!"

William and Reuben immediately accompanied him into another apartment, and

and were soon after joined by the rest of the family, except Fanny, who staid behind with her maids, to perform the last mournful rites to the once beauteous and admired Emma—to shut those now dim eyes, whose brightness had frequently been extolled beyond every thing human; and to close those livid lips which had been celebrated above the ruby and the damask rose.—" Alas! friend, sister, companion of my childhood, why has this task devolved on me?" said Fanny, kissing her. " Thy sorrow and repentance have, I trust, atoned for thy errors. Would to God thou hadst been spared! the sister of my beloved husband should have shared all my tenderness, and our kindness would at length have forced her to forgive herself."

William at that moment entered.—" Fanny, my love," said he, " in our affliction for the dead we must not forget our duties to the living. Suffer me to lead

lead thee from this scene of mortality—thou hast performed all that duty and tenderness require! Oh, Fanny! in how many sorrows have my unhappy family involved thee! When I contemplate thy patience and virtues, how often do I complain of my own unworthiness, and exclaim, that I am blessed above the lot of man!"

"And I above that of woman!" replied Fanny, throwing her arms round his neck, and pressing her lips to his. "Best of sons, fathers, and husbands, blessed be the hour that made me thine! and may I never be less sensible of my happiness than I am at present!"

William clasped her to his bosom, and placing his arm round her waist, drew her from the apartment with the attentive kindness of a bridegroom. Seven days after, the last remains of Emma were deposited at the foot of her mother's coffin, in the churchyard, the whole

whole family, except Godwin and Bernard, attending the funeral, and who were both so warmly entreated to relinquish it, that they at length consented.

CHAPTER XV.

WHILE the foregoing scene was taking place at Inglewood, Mrs. Palmer, on her part, was also surrounded with uneasiness in London: her father's health grew daily worse; and his peevishness increased to so great a degree, that he could scarcely bear her out of his sight.

The hours therefore she had to pass with Anna wère few; yet she was in some measure consoled, by having found her so agreeable a companion as Editha, and so respectable a protectress in her absence as Mrs. Fitzmorris. It is true,

the lady was one for whom she could never have experienced a tender friendship, as she wanted that similarity of disposition that unites hearts; but was, notwithstanding, a desirable acquaintance, and a very proper person to be entrusted with the guidance of youth, as she was particularly careful of their morals—saw little company; that chosen, and of a description that the most rigid prude could not have objected to.

One evening, after Mrs. Palmer had returned from her father's, she received a note from her attorney, informing her, that in the Jamaica fleet, just arrived, was the female negro she had purchased of Mrs. Fitzmorris; but that of the other three, two had chosen to remain behind, with the stipend allowed them: that the son of the woman just arrived was dead, and her money in consequence would be returned; concluding his

his note by entreating her further orders respecting the business.

Mrs. Palmer immediately answered, by desiring him to send on board the vessel for the woman, and cause her to be conducted to her on the following morning; to pay all expences, and place it to her account.

The next day early, Mrs. Palmer sent a card to Mrs. Fitzmorris, requesting the favour of Editha's company for the whole day—a desire that was readily complied with; and she soon after entered.

The expectancy Mrs. Palmer had of Julia's arrival, she resolved not to mention, but determined to surprise her agreeably; and accordingly, about an hour after, on the attorney's being announced, apologized for introducing him. He entered, followed by the libe-

rated female, who no sooner perceived her young mistress, and giving an exclamation of pleasure, she rushed forward, and throwing herself at her feet, embraced her knees, while Editha fell on her neck, unable to articulate a word. —"Julia free, missey!" cried she. "Poor Julia free! Come, live, die, willing slave to dear missey!"

"My good Julia," replied Editha, recovering her surprise, "how I rejoice to see you here! But where is my poor Scipio? I expected him too."

"Ah, missey!" answered Julia, a tear stealing down her cheek, "Scipio die! Ah, missey! when I see no move, no speak, hand cold—my heart how sink! But when I tink again poor Scipio be free, I laugh, clap hands—say, Scipio free *widout* buy! Gone home—*dere* no white man whip, no black slave cry: *dis* comfort poor Julia—dry up tear! Ah, good missey! you cry too—cry for poor negro Scipio!" Then perceiving a tear

tear that had dropped from Editha on her hand, she kissed it off; adding—"White man's smile and tear gain negro heart. Missey, warm mine—make forget sorrow."

"To this lady," answered Editha, taking Julia's ebon hand with her own ivory one, and leading her towards Mrs. Palmer, "we owe every thing. You must love her, Julia, as you loved my mother; and must serve her as faithfully."

"Julia will serve as faithfully," repeated she, laying her hand on her heart, with a sigh.

"And you will love her too," replied Editha, "as I love her. She did not know you; yet she would have bought you, together with your Scipio, and now gives you freedom."

"Julia will give her life! Lady make Julia love; but no promise before know."

"I like your honesty," returned Mrs.

Palmer. "Love me only as you find I deserve."

Editha then explained to her more particularly the obligations she had to Mrs. Palmer; and the necessity there was of neither Mr. nor Mrs. Fitzmorris knowing that she had been instrumental in procuring her freedom, as it might be construed a wilful disobedience of her father's commands.

Mrs. Palmer then told her she should for the present remain with her and attend on Anna; and having already spent more time than she could well afford from her father, she took her leave, and left them together for the day.

Mrs. Palmer, on reaching her father, found him yet worse than she had before seen him; but still, notwithstanding his great age, so attached to life, that he had just resolved to try the Bath waters, which

which had been casually mentioned; and warmly pressed his daughter to accompany him there immediately. This request was particularly unpleasant to Mrs. Palmer, as she could not well refuse a parent in such a situation; and yet knew not how to dispose of Anna, whom, if even she took with her, she should not know where to place when she arrived there, as the same objections would hold at Bath as on her arrival in London.

After repeated deliberation, she at length determined to intrude so far on Mrs. Fitzmorris's kindness, as to entreat to leave her there until her father could fetch her back to the Forest. Thus determined, she waited on the lady, and apologized for the liberty, proposed her suit, which was immediately granted; insisting, however, that Miss Anna's visit should be prolonged until their return from Bath.

These preliminaries settled, Mrs. Palmer found herself more at ease; and, on her return home, informed Anna and Editha of the arrangement that had taken place.

This news had at once the most opposite effects; Editha was enraptured to have Anna entirely with her, while Anna was overwhelmed with grief on the idea of being separated from Mrs. Palmer.

"My dear child," said that lady, "was I not so unhappily situated, nothing should part us; but, my love, the absence will be short, and your grief, however flattering to me, is ungenerous to your friend Editha."

This gentle reprimand dried Anna's tears; she was hurt to appear ungrateful, and determined to conform to what appeared most convenient, without shewing

ing any more uneasiness, whatever it might cost her.

Mrs. Fitzmorris's carriage soon after fetching Editha, they separated for the night, Mrs. Palmer promising to take Anna in the morning.

On Editha's departure, Mrs. Palmer entered more fully into the business. She informed Anna that her father had insisted on her staying in the same house with him when they reached Bath, and that, thus situated, she had no other feasible measure to pursue, but left it to her own choice whether she would remain at Mrs. Fitzmorris's, or whether she should write to her father to fetch her home as speedily as possible.

"My dear madam," replied Anna, "I feel I behave like a petulant, spoiled child, and yet you condescend to humour me! I will not trouble my father

ther to make such a journey at this time of the year, when there is no absolute necessity. I love Editha, and I respect Mrs. Fitzmorris, and will, if you please, remain with them until your return. To part with you I confess is unpleasant to me; but I will endeavour not to disgrace your goodness by my behaviour."

"My beloved child," answered Mrs. Palmer, "a separation cannot be more displeasing to you than to me. You are become essential to my happiness; I am arrived at that age, Anna, when attachments so long cemented are painful to be broken, and nothing but the duty I owe my father could force me to be a day deprived of your company. You are every where received, my love, as my daughter; nor, were you truly so, could you be dearer to my heart. Mrs. Fitzmorris's hospitality must be requited, for my Anna must not be under an obligation; there are a pair of pearl bracelets

bracelets in my casket, that I would wish you to present to Editha; her aunt is fond of shew, and will doubtless be pleased with this mark of attention. I would also wish you, while there, to dress more than you usually do, as it will gratify her to introduce you to her company, while you yourself have too much good sense to suffer your mind to attach itself to such frivolities; you shall therefore, my love, take that casket of glittering toys with you, and wear occasionally such as may best please you, presenting first the pearl bracelets to Editha."

"Oh! madam, how good, how considerate are you for your Anna! Can you wonder I should dread even a week's separation?"

Mrs. Palmer then asked Anna's opinion of Julia, and finding it conformable to her own, it was agreed that, if Mrs. Fitzmorris had no objection, she should

accompany Anna thither as her attendant.

The next morning the separation took place, both Mrs. Palmer and her young friend struggling with their own feelings, fearful of distressing the other.

Mrs. Palmer conducted Anna to Mrs. Fitzmorris, into whose care she resigned her, and finding she had no objection to Julia's attending her, soon after sent her for that purpose.

In the afternoon, Mrs. Palmer departed for Bath, writing first to Inglewood, and enclosing a letter from Anna, informing them of the change that had taken place, and desiring them to make themselves happy on her account, as she was placed in perfect security.

This letter reached them about a week before Emma's death, and when she was

judged

judged in the most imminent danger. The removal of Anna gave them some uneasiness; but the prudence of Mrs. Palmer was so well known to them, that no idea of her being in any danger from the change obtruded on their imagination.

CHAPTER XVI.

On the same day that Anna became an inmate at Mrs. Fitzmorris's, that lady towards evening complained of a sore throat; and on the following morning found herself so ill that a physician was called in, who declared her disorder to be a malignant fever. In the course of the morning Fitzmorris dropped in; and being in expectancy heir to the lady, was by no means the least interested of the family. He was astonished to

find

find Anna a permanent visitor, but too good a dissembler to shew the pleasure that circumstance gave him; his prudence, or rather his cunning, seldom forsook him, unless he was inebriated, which, however, was frequently the case, on which occasion he possessed more of the brute than the man, giving way to the most unbridled passions, his affrighted family flying before him like sheep before the hungry wolf; at other times his hypocrisy surpassed his other vices, for it was great enough to cover all the rest; and even those who were not thoroughly acquainted with him found an excuse for his excesses, if by any chance they were discovered, being pitied for the unhappy propensity he had to liquor, which could transform so respectable a man into a creature so unlike himself.

For two days Mrs. Fitzmorris grew worse, and on the third was declared in

great

great danger; Mr. Fitzmorris in consequence was advised to move his daughter, as the malady was very communicative, and might endanger her health.

Editha had lived entirely with Mrs. Fitzmorris since her mother's death, now two years past, and looked forward with horror to the loss of that friend, as she then must indubitably return to her father's—an event she dreaded.

Mrs. Fitzmorris loved her as much as the coldness of her disposition would permit—an affection which Editha returned with interest, regarding her as her mother, and obeying her as such; her grief, therefore, at this event required all Anna's tenderness to sooth, while Editha's sorrow taught her how keenly susceptible her heart was to the sufferings of a friend, as in her calamity she almost forgot her own grief on parting with Mrs. Palmer.

Mr.

Mr. Fitzmorris, apprised of the danger of the malady, immediately determined to remove his daughter and her companion to a house he had, situated on one side of Hounslow Heath, where, he informed them, they should remain until the event was known. Editha, though she grieved to leave her aunt, yet dared not dispute the will of her father, and accordingly promised to be ready to accompany him on the next morning, Fitzmorris assuming the utmost complacency, and entreating the removal might not deprive them of Miss Palmer's company.

On his departure Anna sat down to write to Mrs. Palmer an account of what had passed; expressing her satisfaction that, as such an unhappy event had occurred, she was on the spot to console the afflicted Editha; and requested Mrs. Palmer's opinion in regard to informing her parents of what had passed, as she

was

was rather inclined to remain silent to them on that score, as it might probably give them uneasiness—spoke highly of Mr. Fitzmorris's kindness, and entreated her immediate answer.

On the removal of the young ladies to Hounslow, they found all prepared for their reception; Fitzmorris receiving them with a pleasure which struck Anna as unfeeling, at a period when his sister was in danger.

The only domestics were his valet and an old woman, who usually kept the house; and who, having daily assistance, made other servants unnecessary, especially as Fitzmorris seldom slept there for more than a night or two together; and then usually accompanied by people before whom he could throw off all disguise, and with whom little ceremony was necessary.

Editha, as her father had not expressly commanded it, did not presume to take a servant with her; but was not so scrupulous on account of Anna, and therefore, before her departure, had ordered one of Mrs. Fitzmorris's servants to conduct Julia to the stage, and give a proper direction where to leave her. Fitzmorris, who simply knew that some slaves had been purchased by Mrs. Palmer or her agent, had never given himself the trouble to inquire into particulars, and was therefore not a little astonished, on the coach stopping, to see Julia, whom he particularly disliked, enter his house. Inquiring into the cause, he found she was one of those liberated, and now the attendant of Anna.

In the first paroxysm of his rage he gave his sister, Mrs. Palmer, Julia, and the whole group to the Devil, cursing his own folly for vesting any power in Mrs. Fitzmorris; but luckily not suspecting

pecting his daughter, who, as she was before a stranger to the parties, he could not include in the offence, though he well knew she was partial to Julia, who had attended his late wife. To shew his dislike would, he considered, only serve to expose himself; he therefore determined to conceal it, and even treat her with a kindness he had never shewn before. Julia, in the mean time, was as little satisfied with her old master, at whose sight she even yet shuddered. However, being warmly attached to Editha, and pleased with the gentle demeanour of Anna, she consoled herself with the idea that he had no longer an unlimited power over her.

The apartments of the young ladies were on opposite sides of the house—a circumstance unpleasing to both, and which Editha mentioned to the housekeeper; but on her replying it was by Mr. Fitzmorris's particular order that Miss Palmer should be accommodated with

with the best bedchamber, she did not presume to say more.

On Fitzmorris's retiring for the night to his own apartment, being alone with his valet (who was nothing inferior in villany to his master), he asked him, with a more complaisant smile than usually enlivened his features, what he thought of their new visitant?

"Why, in good faith," replied the man freely, "I scarcely know; she is a charming girl; and I think, sir, you look as if you would have no objection to give us a new mistress."

"No, on my soul," replied Fitzmorris, "I never intend to commit matrimony more. I cannot say but, if the girl had not been so confoundedly well born and provided for, in point of fortune, I would have endeavoured to make her easy; but, as she is situated, any attempt would be fruitless."

"You

"You were not used to be so easily disheartened," replied the confidant; "you have taken some pains on less interesting subjects."

"True; but I am no longer of a temper to dance attendance, and sue for favours which man ought to command. The women in Turkey are more properly educated, and know how to esteem a compliment offered them; but, now I think on it, how the devil came Julia among the number of slaves liberated by their damned humanity, and my sister's cursed officiousness? She was not one of the old incumbrances, for my father-in-law, I am sure, purchased her."

"That is more than I can tell," replied the man, "for I well know you never meant her to be free; but the business is past recall. She was, if I mistake not, acquainted with the affair of the little mulatto, and gave a hint to my mistress, who never held up her head afterwards."

"Perdition

"Perdition seize you," answered Fitzmorris, "for introducing such a subject! it will banish sleep—fetch me a glass of brandy. Curse the slut! I wish she was poisoned."

The servant soon brought the soporific, and then continued the discourse.—"I attempted to sift her to-night," said he; "but she either knows nothing or is obstinate: thinking the old impression might remain, tried a trifling threat; but it was of no use, for she seems to be aware of the advantage of liberty, grinned in my face, and snapped her fingers."

"D——n her! it is better to sooth than to anger her; for it may prevent her prating. We must find some way, if possible, to get rid of her. In the mean time be still."

Such was the conversation of this detestable pair, after which the servant retired, and left his master to his own thoughts

thoughts and machinations. The valet, by mentioning the little mulatto, had not only given rise to several very disagreeable reflections, but had also reminded his master of another circumstance not altogether so unpleasant, as it was an almost certain recipe for villany to triumph over innocence.

CHAPTER XVII.

IN the morning, while the party were at breakfast, they received a message from town, informing them that Mrs. Fitzmorris was better—news which conveyed the utmost satisfaction to Editha, and also to Anna, who sympathized in her grief; but was totally disagreeable to Fitzmorris, who, the day before, had flattered himself he had an additional ten thousand within his grasp.

During

During the afternoon there was something in the looks and behaviour of Fitzmorris so different from what Anna had been accustomed to, that she shrunk from his ardent gaze, and her face was covered with blushes. Editha too perceived the change, and well knowing how addicted her father was to liquor, trembled lest he should expose himself before her new friend; for the alteration she was too innocent to attribute to any other cause, particularly as she remarked he drank uncommonly during dinner.

Until this day Anna had been perfectly satisfied with her situation: it now began to be disagreeable; and though, like Editha, she totally attributed the cause to liquor, yet she determined to write to her father on the ensuing morning, to signify that she wished to return home.

At supper, Fitzmorris was outwardly cheerful;

cheerful, but at intervals seemed lost in reflection, a sudden gloom at those times overspreading his features. His confidential servant he had sent that evening to town, with orders not to return till the next morning with an account of Mrs. Fitzmorris's health. During supper he apologized to Anna for the absence of his domestics, who were all, he truly said, at his town-house, presenting both her and his daughter with what they wanted. After supper, as they had drank nothing but water, Fitzmorris warmly pressed them to pledge him in a glass of wine to his sister's health, at the same time reaching each one from the sideboard, and so peremptorily urging them, that they could not refuse. Soon after the young friends withdrew, Editha accompanying Anna to her chamber, in the most delicate manner excusing her father's unhappy propensity to wine, and conjuring her not to let it weaken their friendship.

Fitzmorris, now left alone, his head resting on his hand, for some time remained lost in thought. At length breaking silence—"What am I about to do?" said he; "violate the rights of hospitality, and, perhaps, involve myself in ruin! for, should it be discovered, what will be the consequence?—Consequences! I defy them—none can arise, in two hours she will be insensible to every thing, and I may in safety seize what I should in vain entreat, for well can I read the coldness of her heart in her averted eye and distant behaviour. D——d reflection, enemy to pleasure, be gone!" drinking a goblet of wine. "With my fortune, am I to shrink at such a trifle?—surely not; if it is discovered, who will believe such a tale? My fortune and character will protect me; besides, I have, prudently in this case, no accomplice, and therefore need not fear discovery."

While

While the villanous Fitzmorris was thus plotting the most infernal scheme that could disgrace manhood, Anna and Editha were in social conversation in the chamber of the former, who, in the confusion of Mrs. Fitzmorris's ill health and their removal, had not until now recollected the pearl bracelets that her best friend had desired her to present to Editha Taking them therefore from the case, which she had in her pocket, she fixed them on the arms of her companion, who received them, saying—"Anna, I will keep these for your sake and Mrs Palmer's; but, indeed, on my own account, did I possess all the jewels in the universe, I would give them never to see my father inebriated again."

They then examined the cont the casket, which contained a p rings and necklace of pearl, a several rings, on which trin no more material conversat

coursed, trying on some and admiring others, until at length Anna complained of being uncommonly sleepy, and Editha kissing her, bade her good-night.

Anna, when alone, endeavoured to undress herself, but was unable: she felt sick, her hands suddenly became listless, and confused ideas, on different subjects, at once floated on her disordered fancy. "Oh;" said she, faintly, "it is surely the hand of death! The wine has killed me; it tasted bitter, and my heart recoiled. Fitzmorris's looks frightened me as he presented it, and I scarce knew what I did, or I should not have drank it. I shall never more see my family—parents —mamma, nor yet Reuben. Oh God, protect and guide them! Oh Editha, why, why have you left me?"

eluded she arose from her seat

found the giddiness in her

it to suffer her to make any

reeling towards the bed,

she

she threw herself upon it, convinced she should rise no more.

All was now still throughout the house; lust and villany alone were waking, and, in the form of Fitzmorris, stole into the chamber; like the hateful foe of mankind, darkness was best suited to his deeds; he therefore had extinguished his candle before he entered, and was not a little surprised to find a light burning on the table, and Anna dressed, though in a lethargic and death-like sleep, her cap, handkerchief, and the contents of the casket, lying scattered on the floor, where they had fallen as she attempted to rise.

He judged rightly, that the strength of the potion had overpowered her, and rejoiced to find the effect so favoura[illegible] his wishes. Determined to fe[illegible] with her beauty before he [illegible] the light, as there was [illegible] distant prospect of her av[illegible]

proached, and for a moment contemplated the enchanting loveliness of her face and person, licentiousness adding a deeper crimson to his cheek than even the flush of wine. He stooped to embrace her, but a convulsive smile at that instant overspreading her face, displayed the beauteous dimples of her cheek, which, however they might have charmed any other beholder, appeared to have a different effect upon Fitzmorris, who gave a momentary start, but instantly recovering himself, snatched up her hand, and imprinted it with an ardent kiss; but as suddenly again dropping it, he stood transfixed with astonishment—a voice more than human appeared to sound in his ears—a clammy sweat hung on his forehead—the intemperate fever of pas- · ·ave way to the cold shiverings of nd desire was lost in amaze- ·rror.

END OF VOL. III

··, Leadenhall-Street, London.